
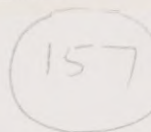
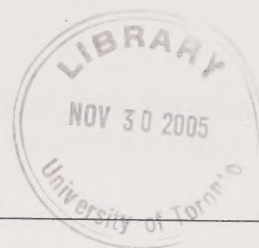


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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 23 November 2005

Mercredi 23 novembre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 23 November 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 23 novembre 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): Last May, I initiated a resolution in this House calling on the government to immediately assign the standing committee on finance and economic affairs the task of investigating Ontario's industrial and economic competitiveness.

This should have led to the development of an action plan to maintain and expand Ontario's domestic and international markets in the coming years. My goal was to support the protection of the manufacturing jobs that we must have in Ontario, and the new ones we will need if we are to enhance our quality of life and our competitive advantage worldwide.

Immediate action was needed last spring, and business leaders agreed. My resolution was supported by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Canadian Chemical Producers' Association, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, the C. D. Howe Institute, the Employers' Advocacy Council and the Ontario Real Estate Association.

In response to my resolution, the government did nothing. Here we are six months later, and Canada's industrial engine, the province of Ontario, continues to bleed manufacturing jobs at an alarming rate. For example, Glenoit Corp., formerly known as Borg Textiles, based in Elmira, will be closing its doors just before Christmas, resulting in the loss of 77 good jobs.

This week's announcement by General Motors is a crushing body blow to the GM workers and Ontario's economy. Plants in Waterloo–Wellington like Budd Automotive, Lear Seating and Kuntz Electroplating all sell to Big Three automakers, and we know that parts suppliers will be affected by any major restructuring of the automotive industry.

The government should have listened six months ago, and they'd better start listening now.

MICHELLE VALBERG

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I rise today to pay tribute to a gifted photographer in a city of international repute in that fine art form. Michelle Valberg's photography continues the legacy of her friends Yousuf

and Malik Karsh. Michelle's work is not just behind the camera; she also gives enormously of herself for the betterment of Ottawa.

Michelle believes in contributing to the community through voluntary work—fundraising for the Ottawa Regional Cancer Centre, for example, for CHEO, as well as a variety of other Ottawa-based charities. Along with her colleagues from the SCO Health Service Foundation board, Debbie O'Brien and Sister Veronique Belcourt, Ms. Valberg was recently presented with the Quality of Life Award from St. Joseph's Women's Shelter.

Michelle has received a series of accolades from the community in recognition of her philanthropic heart. She has been named Algonquin College Alumni of the Year, the YM/YWCA's Woman of Distinction in the Arts, Ottawa's Businesswoman of the Year, and listed in the Ottawa Business Journal 40 under 40 Award.

Michelle Valberg not only has an eye for the lens, but a keen vision for giving to others. Awaiting the launch of her third book, Michelle is an Ottawa Centre talent to be watched. I want to personally say congratulations to Michelle for another award recognizing your contributions to helping make Ottawa a better community.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today because of the chronic underfunding of hospitals in my riding of Durham, and indeed in all of the GTA/905 hospitals.

Brian Lemon, chief executive officer for Lakeridge Health, was quoted in the Scugog Standard this month, where he said there are no further cuts that can be made to reduce an estimated \$14-million deficit without cutting patient care. Cutting patient care is not an option to me, to Lakeridge or to the community where I have the privilege to live and serve.

Members may well know that Lakeridge is among the hospitals in the GTA/905 that are facing a funding gap of \$655 million. In other words, GTA/905 residents receive \$164 less per person annually in the provincial funding shortfall. Lakeridge Health Corp. faces additional challenges because it is a multi-site hospital serving both urban and rural growth communities.

Lakeridge Health is to be commended for its commitment to acting on behalf of its patients first and commissioning an expert panel to review matters related to the financial health of our hospitals. I look forward to the findings of the expert panel, chaired by John Reid and including Sister Elizabeth Davis and Ruth Robinson.

The entire team at Lakeridge Health, including board chair Marion Saunders, are outstanding providers in our community, and I ask for fair funding to ensure that this outstanding care will continue. I know that our critic, Elizabeth Witmer, will keep the pressure on George Smitherman to do the right thing.

ESL WEEK

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I rise today to bring to the attention of this chamber ESL Week in Ontario, another hallmark of Ontario's flourishing diversity. This week-long event, which took place just a few days ago, celebrates and recognizes the network of ESL programs available throughout Toronto.

These programs are offered either privately or through public school boards, and now even at the university and college level, which is particularly welcome given the large and growing number of new Canadians who wish to become fully integrated members of Canadian society. I bring to your attention that without these programs, many newcomers will go without the necessary language skills.

As an example, the Toronto District School Board, the largest school board in the country, notes that 41% of students have a language other than English as their first language. This particularly highlights the need for ESL programs in Toronto, and in particular for my own riding of Etobicoke North.

However, challenges remain. We must continue to promote the teaching of ESL. "Only 60 of 1,300 graduating students at the University of Toronto's OISE will take the ESL elective in any given year." That means the vast majority of teachers will be ill-equipped to teach individual students who require ESL instruction.

It is our duty as legislators to promote and properly resource the recruitment of instructors and the teaching of ESL, for language itself is one of the first stepping stones to participation, access, ease of navigation, reaching one's potential and eventual success in society, for your and subsequent generations.

1340

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Ontarians are fast losing their faith and confidence in the McGuinty Liberal government's ability to manage health care and respond to patient needs. It is becoming increasingly obvious that the Liberals have no plan for health human resources in the province. Yesterday, emergency doctors came to Toronto to warn us about long wait times and suffering of patients. Earlier this week, the Ontario Medical Association reported that not enough is being done to address the doctor shortage in Ontario. They said that under the Liberal watch we are now 2,100 doctors short and, according to the OMA report, "A staggering 1.4 million Ontarians could be without a physician within the next year." In fact, the headline of their report read, "Doctor Shortage a Deepening Crisis." Your policies will leave us 2,800 doctors short in 2010.

Although the government has promised to hire an additional 8,000 nursing positions, a recent press release issued by the Ontario Nurses' Association also talks about the nursing crisis and states that this government is falling far behind this target. To quote: "They are making matters worse. We expect to hear of as many as 700 additional nursing position layoffs in the next month, as hospitals announce cutbacks in an effort to balance their budgets."

Yes, under this government, patients are suffering.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Earlier this week, on the brink of an election call, we saw the federal and provincial Liberals sign an immigrant funding agreement. Both parties lauded it as a watershed deal that will improve the lives of newcomers. Today we saw a labour market agreement that mentioned again increasing newcomers' prospects.

After carefully reading details of both agreements, it is clear that both lack any new, much-needed concrete plans to fix the system that makes talented, industrious newcomers part of an underclass. It takes them over 10 years, and sometimes never, to attain a standard of living comparable to their Canadian peers, despite the fact that they often have a high level of education and training.

Both the federal and provincial Liberals keep failing to make good on their repeated promises to bring in a workable system that recognizes foreign-trained credentials. The McGuinty Liberals unequivocally said in their red book that if any trade or profession had not eliminated barriers to entry within their first year of office, they, as the government, would act.

Well, they haven't. It's been over a year—well over a year. The skilled immigrants who live across the GTA from Scarborough-Rouge River, Crescent Town to York and Peel regions and across the province are left to ask: Where is this promised action? When will the doors be opened for them to be able to work in their chosen professions?

WESTDALE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): Our government has introduced programs to reduce class sizes, programs to enhance student test scores, and initiatives to keep children in school until age 18, and we want to celebrate that these efforts are already paying off.

We are proud of our schools in Hamilton West, but there is one school in particular that deserves mention in the House today. Westdale High School has just received local, national and international recognition for finishing first in the field of mathematics. The competitors included all public, separate and private schools in Hamilton-Wentworth in Pascal, Cayley and Fermat contests which were written by over 90,000 students from nearly 1,400 schools across Canada.

Westdale students received 14 Pascal certificates, 19 Cayley certificates and 10 Fermat certificates. Each

certificate of distinction represents a ranking in the top 25% of all contestants in the country. Eleven Westdale students were even invited to write the American International Mathematics exam in order to receive North American recognition for their skills. One student finished in the top 1% of all students in grade 10 North America.

Kudos to all the students who received recognition for all of their hard work and dedication. We wish you continued success in your future careers, and we want you to know in Westdale that we are so proud of your achievements.

DAIRY FARMERS OF ONTARIO

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): It is with pleasure that I rise today to welcome the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, also known as DFO, to the Legislature, and to recognize our dairy farmers' friends in the gallery today. DFO is a non-profit farm organization representing Ontario's 5,047 licensed dairy farms.

Dairy is the largest sector in Ontario's agriculture industry and a major economic asset to this province. In the 12 months ending June 30, 2005, DFO marketed approximately 2.5 billion litres of raw milk on behalf of their farmers. Furthermore, the value of dairy products shipped from Ontario processing plants is in the neighbourhood of \$4 billion.

Milk transportation is also another important rural economic activity associated with dairy farms, with 62 milk transport companies operating over 260 vehicles on a daily basis to pick up milk and deliver the product to processing plants across Ontario.

Most recently, DFO joined Premier McGuinty, Minister Cordiano and MPP Tony Wong on the Ontario trade and investment mission to China. As leaders and innovators, Ontario's farmers were warmly received by their Chinese hosts, who were eager to learn about our best practices in agriculture.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I rise today to cheer about some exciting news that the residents of Windsor and Essex received yesterday on behalf of the province of Ontario. DaimlerChrysler Canada confirmed that it will invest \$768 million in its Canadian operations, \$610 million of which will go toward building a new paint shop for its Windsor assembly plant. This is the largest investment in our area in half a decade, and the residents of my riding and I couldn't be more pleased.

This investment would not occur if it were not for the support of both levels of government, who together have agreed to add nearly \$123 million to the investment. I know it was the hard work on behalf of Premier Dalton McGuinty and Minister of Economic Development and Trade Joe Cordiano, among others, that resulted in this historic investment that will increase flexibility and put in place new technologies at the Windsor assembly plant,

including the implementation of prototyping, ensuring that it continues to be competitive and thrive well into the future. The McGuinty government, as its part, has committed \$76.8 million through the Ontario automotive investment strategy.

This announcement proves that Premier Dalton McGuinty's auto strategy is working. In just over one year, we've attracted \$5.3 billion in new auto investment and secured thousands of high-value jobs for years to come.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would like to bring members' attention to a former colleague. Ron Johnson, from Brantford, is in the members' west gallery. Ron represented Brantford in the 36th Parliament.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the family of one of our pages, Andrew Martin. In the gallery is his father, David Martin; his mother, Linda Martin; his twin brother, Jonathan Martin, who was a page last term in this House; and his sister, Taylor Martin, who wants to be a page next year.

The Speaker: Of course, it's not a point of order, but welcome.

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Like the member opposite, I would like to introduce Sandy Smale from Port Credit. Sandy's one of the great volunteers we have in Ontario who help build our community by welcoming new families to Port Credit, especially those disadvantaged and having a hard time getting started. Sitting beside her is Lori Mason. Lori Mason runs the Mason store, which is a ship chandlery store in Port Credit, but she's also the founder of the largest in-water boat show in Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker: Again, it's not a point of order.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I call upon all members to join the dairy farmers at the reception at 5 o'clock this evening in committee room 2 to show the farmers that we thank them for giving us the great value of dairy products.

The Speaker: It's not a point of order, but an important point of information perhaps.

1350

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 209, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to the suspension of drivers' licences / *Projet de loi 209, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les suspensions de permis de conduire.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for second reading.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LABOUR MARKET AGREEMENTS

ENTENTES SUR LE MARCHÉ DU TRAVAIL

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): This is an historic day for Ontario. I am pleased to announce to the Legislature that this morning I met with the federal Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and minister responsible for democratic renewal, the Honourable Belinda Stronach, at George Brown College to sign not one but two labour market agreements with the federal government.

The McGuinty government has signed a labour market development agreement and a labour market partnership agreement with the federal government. These agreements will strengthen training and rapid re-employment services for our people.

Ontario was the only province or territory without an LMDA. Premier McGuinty made achieving an LMDA an important part of Ontario's prosperity agenda. He took a very strong stand. Premier McGuinty has delivered.

Ces deux ententes seront très importantes pour les Ontariens et Ontariennes qui veulent acquérir de nouvelles compétences, perfectionner leurs compétences ou avoir accès à un marché du travail qui leur était auparavant inaccessible.

These two agreements will mean much to Ontarians looking to acquire new skills, upgrade their skills or access a labour market previously closed to them.

We will see more resources to provide more opportunities for people to become apprentices, more resources to help new Canadians and the internationally trained to continue their chosen careers in our province, more opportunities for our children and older workers to access services that will lead to good careers, and more opportunities for those people who face barriers to participating in our current services, such as aboriginal people, people with disabilities and older workers, to find the services and training that meet their individual needs. Rapid re-employment services will be provided to workers facing plant closure.

The labour market development agreement will see the transfer of \$525 million annually in federal employment support programs to Ontario. It means we can now complete the work on our one-stop employment assistance project. When someone needs academic upgrading,

skills improvement or apprenticeship training, no longer will the first words out of the provider be, "Are you eligible for employment insurance?" We will develop a system accessible to all Ontarians.

The labour market partnership agreement means new opportunities for Ontarians. The investments start in 2005-06 and build to an extra \$314 million each year. These investments represent new skills, new hope and new opportunities for Ontarians.

The Reaching Higher plan, \$6.2 billion extra in post-secondary education and skills, is strengthening our foundation for prosperity. These two agreements will enhance our plan.

These agreements will help make our people stronger, better skilled and more ready to compete in the world.

Ontario's progress has long been fuelled by each generation's desire to see the next generation go farther. Today we have many reasons to celebrate as we anticipate the next steps we'll take with our partners to ensure that individual Ontarians can fulfill their potential and help Ontario achieve its full potential.

FIREFIGHTERS

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I rise today to pay tribute to the professional firefighters of Ontario. The McGuinty government is working to build a stronger, safer, more prosperous Ontario. No group is more critical to that undertaking than professional firefighters.

Today is Queen's Park Day for the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. It's the day set aside each year to acknowledge the great contribution that professional firefighters make to public safety. Thousands of firefighters risk their lives every day to protect us from the ravages of fire. They also serve as a resource for rescue operations when lives and livelihoods are threatened by accident or force of nature. Many also work at the equally important job of fire prevention, as inspectors and resource persons, educating the public on fire prevention methods.

Unfortunately, some of these valiant heroes have paid the ultimate price in their efforts to keep us safe. This past June, I was privileged to attend the dedication ceremony at Queen's Park of the Ontario Firefighters' Memorial. Firefighters who died in the line of duty safeguarding their communities are remembered at this memorial. We do this so that no man or woman who dies while protecting the lives and property of fellow citizens will ever be forgotten.

Every day, these men and women toil in the extremes of weather under difficult circumstances to protect us, to save lives, and to prevent loss. And their efforts are paying off. Although every fire fatally represents a terrible loss for a family in the community, Ontario's numbers are encouraging. In 2004, our preventable structure fire death rate was the lowest in the province's history. This achievement is testament to the hard work and dedication of members of the fire and emergency services, and we certainly owe them a debt of gratitude.

Today, Queen's Park Day for the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, I'm proud to salute this association and the men and women it represents. Their courage and commitment reassure us. Their professionalism and competence safeguard us.

I wish to acknowledge the presence in the visitors' gallery of the president of the OPFFA, Mr. Fred LeBlanc; vice-president of the association, Mr. Brian George; and many of their association members. These two gentlemen are outstanding advocates for the interests of their members, and valuable partners for the government in addressing the issues of concern to firefighters. I want to say a special thank you to both of them for their hard work and constructive engagement in helping us deal with these issues.

The government recognizes both the commitment and the contribution of this province's professional firefighters. We appreciate the hazards they face on a daily basis. And that's why last March I was proud to announce the \$30-million Ontario fire service grant to municipal fire departments for training and equipment. The funding means additional resources for fire services to make sure that they have the right tools to do their job. This was the first time in more than 20 years that the Ontario government has relied on such funding, and it's the single largest grant from the province to fire services.

We also recognize that the kinds of emergencies firefighters must respond to can involve anything from fire to chemicals to radiological or even biological or nuclear threats. That's why our government is continuing to fund three key central fire services to maintain their chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear—or CBRN—response units. These specialized units, based in Windsor, Toronto and Ottawa, can be deployed anywhere in the province.

I'm also pleased to say that our government is continuing to fund Toronto's heavy urban search and rescue, or HUSAR, unit. As with the CBRN teams, the HUSAR unit will assist any community in the province that may need its specialized training and equipment. I've seen the resources and expertise this team can bring to a situation, and I can tell you that they are very impressive.

1400

Helping to support firefighters is a part of our government's plan to build on Ontario's greatest strength: our people. One way we do that is by better protecting them. Firefighters, like other emergency workers, put themselves at risk of infection, from diseases such as HIV/AIDS or hepatitis B or C, through contact with members of the public. An emergency worker, however, must sometimes endure quite a long wait before they can get the potential source of the infection tested. The mental stress and lifestyle changes experienced by a person who may have been exposed to infection while protecting us are substantial.

That's why the McGuinty government is working to further protect those who protect us through the introduction of the Mandatory Blood Testing Act. This bill, if passed, would allow emergency first aid providers

and victims of crime to find out more quickly whether they have been exposed to infection from certain viruses. It would give them peace of mind to go about their work with greater confidence, and that's something that benefits all Ontarians.

Queen's Park Day is also about recognizing the relationship between the OPFFA and the government. As legislators, we work and consult regularly with organizations that have special expertise and a particular interest in the various issues that demand our attention. So it is with the OPFFA, representing, as it does, the interests of approximately 9,500 professional firefighters in Ontario.

We value the excellent relationship that exists between the government and the OPFFA. It's a relationship that thrives on mutual respect, on the constructive engagement of persons like Fred LeBlanc and Brian George, and on our government's commitment to building effective partnerships with all our stakeholders. It's a relationship that enables us to better understand the concerns of firefighters across the province and respond effectively. We especially value this relationship because the work of Ontario's firefighters is central to our goal of building a stronger, safer and more prosperous province.

On behalf of the people of Ontario, I say thanks, again, to our firefighters for all they do to keep our communities and our citizens safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Community Safety in recognizing in our presence the professional firefighters. On behalf of our leader, John Tory, and the Progressive Conservative caucus, it's great, Brian, Fred and your colleagues, to see you at Queen's Park today. It's very much appreciated.

One of the most difficult challenges in serving in the role of Minister of Community Safety, or Solicitor General, as it has been called in years gone by, is attending the funerals of fallen firefighters and police officers and seeing the impact that has on their colleagues in the services, on the families and on the communities affected, and really, more broadly speaking, right across the country in those brotherhoods, if you will.

One of the things I am most proud of in terms of my time as Solicitor General in our government was the establishment of the survivors' tuition fund to assist the families of those fallen front-line officers in terms of ensuring that they can have an education, and also expanding that to cover certain living expenses as well.

I'm very proud of the fact that our government initiated the firefighters' memorial at Queen's Park to also recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by firefighters over the years in Ontario.

I'm not sure there was a widespread appreciation of the role of firefighters among governments and the public at large until we all witnessed 9/11 and the huge loss of life by fire services in the city of New York. Then I think we had some real, true appreciation of the challenges a firefighter can face at any time, 24 hours a day, seven

days a week. I think that led as well to the creation of the CBRN teams and the HUSAR teams the minister mentioned.

Ontario is very fortunate indeed to have outstanding firefighters on the professional front lines protecting our communities. But beyond that, I think if you take a look at the public safety arm of the ministry, the fire marshal's office and his staff, the professional firefighters, the chiefs of this province and the volunteer services, the people of Ontario are extremely well served by people who are protecting us, day in and day out. Thank you very much.

LABOUR MARKET AGREEMENTS

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I want to respond to the minister's announcement today about the labour market development agreement, and I just have one little bit of advice: We on this side of the House have had experience with Belinda Stronach and loyalty, so I would cash that cheque as quickly as you can.

The minister referred to this as an historic agreement, but his press release may have had a typo in it because, quite frankly, with this being the second multimillion-dollar announcement in a week when both a provincial Ontario by-election has been called to save a Liberal seat and a desperate federal government is about to fold its tent, we now—

Interjection.

Mr. Jackson: Well, you should look at the inside of this agreement, because I can tell you one thing: Your cabinet has not had a look at the details of this agreement. And I will tell you why I can tell. If you look at the details, do you wonder why Quebec has such a gap? It's because they got a much better deal than we're getting. Do you wonder why Ontario hasn't signed a deal like this before?

The media have not been privy to this agreement, but what we do know about this agreement is that the hundreds of millions of dollars that Ontarians pay into the employment insurance fund every year, this multibillion-dollar slush fund that the federal government has had, under this new agreement, we don't have access to those dollars like we had before. In fact the plan, by transferring and downloading this responsibility on to the province of Ontario, has lessened our access to the very dollars that we in Ontario paid disproportionately more of to the federal government.

Secondly, you have a situation now where, in the details of this agreement, every federal civil servant in this province who is displaced by this downloading becomes our responsibility. It's a government that probably isn't going to last very long, but even if it did, how come we only have a one-year agreement? Much the same way the minister was unable to get a multi-year firm commitment on daycare, we were unable to get—

Interjection.

Mr. Jackson: Not a multi-year commitment. It says right in your press release that—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My response is to the Minister of Training. It's amazing what an upcoming election will do to bring about an agreement that has eluded the provincial and federal Liberals for at least two years. It's this pre-election election pinata that grows bigger and bigger every day. It's full of goodies and promises, in return for yet another Liberal mandate.

I tell you, here is a question: Why does it take new immigrants today more than 10 years to catch up with their Canadian peers? Very simply, neither the federal nor provincial governments have concrete plans to deal with immigrant poverty, revamp the settlement sector and allow, in particular, professionals trained abroad to practise their professions in this country. More money will not change the fact that there is no concrete plan to improve the lot of immigrants in this province.

In 2003, your campaign platform, the McGuinty platform, made the following promise: "We will require that all Ontario trades and professions accelerate the entry of qualified new Canadians. If, after one year, any profession or trade has not eliminated barriers to entry, we will act."

Interjection: It's done.

Mr. Marchese: Some Liberal backbencher said, "It's done." It is not done. You have done nothing except to talk and talk, and that's about all you've accomplished.

My point is this: Unless you say to those regulatory bodies, "Open up the doors," until you do that, we will not have solved the problems of poverty and this underclass of immigrants. You now have a labour market agreement. What we need from you is to keep your promise and to have a plan that states, "We will require that all Ontario trades' and professions' regulatory boards accelerate entry of qualified new Canadians." That's what we need from you.

1410

FIREFIGHTERS

POMPIERS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats join in welcoming firefighters from across Ontario to this Legislature and in saluting the courage, commitment, dedication and professionalism of these women and men. But the platitudes are simply not enough. If we truly appreciate the contributions that these highly skilled and professional firefighters, women and men from big-city and small-town Ontario, make to public health and safety, then we'd better commit ourselves to a couple of things. We'd better commit ourselves to adequate staffing levels for our fire services—big-city, small-city, small-town and village included. That means the provincial government has to become actively and aggressively involved in assisting the funding of the adequate staffing levels.

New Democrats make it quite clear that the 10 in 10 standard established by the Ontario fire marshal's office,

in itself not met by so many communities in the province, is as well inadequate. We join professional firefighters in calling for immediate implementation plus support for the National Fire Protection Agency 1710 standard. Anything less is a disservice to folks in our communities and an injustice to those firefighters, because inadequate staffing not only puts your neighbours and your family at risk; it puts these firefighters at risk.

As well, we want to make it very clear that New Democrats call upon this government to immediately amend legislation to ensure that there is a recognition of the risk that firefighters undertake on a daily basis by virtue of their exposure to, and increased risk and likelihood of, cancer. We call for recognition of presumptive standards using the significant contributing factor test with respect to things like colon and testicular cancer, multiple myeloma, lung cancer, stomach cancer, esophageal cancer due to asbestos exposure, liver and pancreatic cancer, and malignant melanoma. Anything less makes our words in this Legislature hollow on today's occasion.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Je veux dire, avec mes collègues néo-démocrates, que c'est un gros plaisir aujourd'hui d'avoir parmi nous les pompiers de la province de l'Ontario. Mais je peux vous dire, comme représentant de Timmins-Baie James, que la question faisant affaire avec le nombre de personnel dont on a besoin pour répondre aux besoins de la communauté est quelque chose qu'on connaît très bien dans notre circonscription. On dit au gouvernement qu'ils ont besoin de prendre un rôle plus actif pour s'assurer d'avoir le personnel nécessaire dans nos services de pompiers pour s'assurer qu'eux autres peuvent faire ce qu'ils doivent faire pour assurer la sécurité du peuple.

VISITORS

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wonder if you would help me welcome the political science and journalism students from Queen's University who are in the House today under the sponsorship of one of our favourite reporters here, Christina Blizzard.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Welcome. That is not a point of order.

We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the Kingdom of Bahrain, led by Dr. Fatima Mohamed Al-Balooshi, the Minister of Social Affairs. Welcome.

I would also ask members to join me in welcoming Addie Peterson, who is today acting as a legislative page. Addie attends Williston Central School in Williston, Vermont, and is shadowing our pages here today.

I would also like to introduce in the Speaker's gallery Mrs. Mary Peterson, mother of Addie, who is a state representative from Vermont. Please help me in welcoming Mrs. Peterson.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. When I first asked your Minister of Government Services about the ad contracts given to your Liberal friends a week or so ago, he mentioned privacy issues as the reason for not releasing all of the information so that all of us could see, as you have claimed and he has claimed, that everything was above-board. My guess is that that has to do with your strong desire to keep the documents private—those are the privacy issues—for reasons very well known to you. But this is \$6 million of public money we're talking about here, so I'll ask you today, Premier: Will you agree to table all documents that led to the decision to award \$6 million in public money—a 6,000% increase—to your friends in a Liberal ad agency during your first year in office? Will you table those documents?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm glad to take the question. I know that my friend will want to remember and look fondly upon Bensimon Byrne, since they were employed in fact by Rogers and worked on campaigns on their behalf. I know he'll want to remember that.

The members opposite have raised some questions in connection with this. Mr. Robert Farnley, an 11-year veteran first appointed by the NDP, acts as the current vice-chair and executive director of the Advertising Review Board. He specifically said, "There was no political involvement in the procuring of these contracts. I can confirm each was awarded on the basis of merit as determined by a panel consisting of a civil service representative from the client ministry and two representatives from the Advertising Review Board." I think we are all of us in this House entitled to rely upon the objective, independent opinion of Mr. Robert Farnley, current vice-chair and executive director of the Advertising Review Board.

Mr. Tory: Let's talk about what we can rely on. I say to the Premier, you have some trouble distinguishing between what goes on in a company, any company, and your responsibilities for public money—\$6 million of taxpayers' money.

Your Liberal Party is the one that said, "Just trust us; we won't raise taxes." Then after that, you said, "Just trust us; we'll balance the budget." Now you're saying, "Just trust us; it's only a coincidence. It's all above-board that our Liberal ad agency got \$6 million of public money in the first year we were in office—a 6,000% increase."

According to a Toronto Sun report on Friday, it was revealed that Marcel Weider, a long-time Liberal operative, was awarded almost \$1 million in contracts from your government during your first year in office, after receiving \$123,000 from the Liberal Party for communications work during the campaign. Look at the optics

here: First, there's Bensimon Byrne and the \$6 million, and then we have Marcel Wieder, the man responsible for a supposedly third-party negative ad campaign, who got \$1 million. What is your explanation for all of this?

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me say with all fondness, I'm going to miss Mr. Baird and that rousing cheer.

Again, it's one thing for the leader of the official opposition to question the responses given by members of the government, but I think he goes a step too far when he questions the integrity of Mr. Farnley. He is objective, he is independent, he operates at arm's length to the government, and he's provided an opinion here which I think we are all entitled to and in fact have the responsibility to abide by.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It worked for the two governments before us.

Again, he specifically said, "There was no political involvement in the procuring of these contracts." It seems to me that that is very straightforward and very clear. I can understand why my friend opposite would want to create the appearance of something when there is in fact nothing there, but the matter has been settled.

Mr. Tory: If the gentleman is as objective as you say—and I have no reason to believe he's not—I tell you what: Just make the documents public and then we can all see that everything he says is backed up by the documentation. We've asked for them under freedom of information. As you know, that will take months. Just make them public.

Unfortunately, it doesn't end with Bensimon Byrne and Marcel Wieder. We have Allard Johnson Communications, another firm that helped with your advertising on your campaign. It's shown in your filing and through the public accounts tabled by your government that they got \$344,000 in advertising contracts from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. They've never been in the public accounts before as having received a nickel. Do you expect us to believe that this too was a coincidence?

1420

Why don't you just release all of the details of these contracts—Bensimon Byrne, Marcel Wieder, Allard Johnson—so then we can all see that it's all above-board, as you say it is? Release the documents.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Yes, I do expect you to believe that.

I understand where the leader of the official opposition is coming from. There was an issue of some kind related to advertising that had some political capital on Parliament Hill. He's now trying to find some way to shoehorn in on that story. I understand that. But we have a set of rules in place which are tighter than the rules that were left to us by the previous government. We're proud of those rules, and I can say that in each and every instance, we have stuck to those rules and abided by those rules. So if the member opposite has a concern, I'd encourage him to take it up with the Advertising Review Board. But

the matter has been addressed specifically by Mr. Farnley, the current vice-chair and executive director, and I think that we're all entitled to rely on that advice and that opinion.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): Again, my question is to the Premier. According to the deputy chief economist of the Toronto Dominion Bank, soaring prices for electricity and natural gas are a prime reason for the more than 42,000 manufacturing jobs Ontario has lost over the past year.

As we know, the Cascades coated-paper plant issued layoff notices yesterday to the 375 remaining employees at the company. That plant, as the Premier will know, is the fifth-largest employer in Thunder Bay. They cited the fact specifically, as a main consideration here, that they've been hit with a 25% increase in energy costs on the watch of your government. Do you have anything meaningful to say to the families, to the community of Thunder Bay and to this company with respect to what you're going to do to help them and help their community?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I know that the leader of the official opposition will have had an opportunity to review the press release issued just yesterday by Cascades. He will know that while energy is cited as a factor, there are also five other factors cited. What he may not know is that, thus far, during the past year, Newfoundland has lost two plants in the forestry sector; New Brunswick has lost three; Quebec, where electricity prices are much lower than ours, has lost five so far; Saskatchewan has lost one; and British Columbia has lost two. I know that my friend will want to recognize the fact that there are significant factors at play here that extend far beyond the immediate issue of electricity pricing within the province of Ontario. I know that in his supplementary he's going to want to make it clear to all concerned that there are a number of factors at play in globalization—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

Mr. Tory: I'm happy to make that clear, and also make clear that I'm sure it really makes the people in Thunder Bay feel a lot better to hear you stand up and say, "Don't worry about the job losses in Thunder Bay; everybody else is losing jobs too." What an incredible abdication of responsibility. The fact is, your energy policies are mentioned in the press release. Whether it's on a list of one or a list of five, they're mentioned as a specific contributor.

The McGuinty skyrocketing hydro bills and the irresponsible promise to close the coal plants without an alternative are a major contributing factor to the uncertainty affecting manufacturing jobs in this province—42,000 jobs so far. Then we have the 3,600 more jobs from General Motors, where they too said that energy was a consideration. They've complained that their energy costs have almost doubled. Cascades said

that they've seen a 25% increase. North American Palladium Ltd., at their Lac des Iles palladium mine—60 full- and part-time jobs are gone because of high fuel and energy costs.

What explanation do you have for these families, these communities and these companies who say that your energy policies are one of the considerations that's causing these jobs to be lost?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: There's no denying that the Conservative government left our province in a mess when it comes to our electricity.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): A horrible mess.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: A horrible mess. We're pleased that we've been able to get on-line 2,300 new megawatts of generation. We're pleased that we've got more than 9,000 megawatts in the pipeline at the present time. But I'm not nearly as bleak and as gloom-and-doom and as dark-minded and as pessimistic as the leader of the official opposition when it comes to the economy.

Let me quote Mr. Ted Carmichael with J.P. Morgan, who told 680 News earlier this month something about the economy. He said, "The economy seems to still be creating jobs at a good pace, and I think the early good news for workers is that their hourly earnings are rising. They are up almost 4% from a year ago." So more jobs and higher pay: It's a pretty good story for the labour market. That's the real story. Beyond that: 214,000 net new jobs; the unemployment rate at its lowest level since 2001; we have a brand new labour market development agreement that—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Tory: The painful part is that you leave out of the real story the fact that there are these huge numbers of job losses taking place at the same time, and it doesn't end with the ones that have been mentioned so far.

Your Minister of Finance heard first-hand at his pre-budget consultation meeting that Lamb Technicon in Windsor and Fleetwood Metal Industries in Tilbury are shutting down and moving to the United States. Some 200 families will be without paycheques as a result. Halla, one of Belleville's most successful manufacturers, announced recently it's laying off 50 full-time employees and an undisclosed number of part-time workers. All three of these companies were involved in supplying the Big Three manufacturers—at least 250 men and women added to the ripple effect of the layoffs announced so far, starting in September.

Do you have anything meaningful to say? Do you think these 250 families are part of the real story, as you put it? And what are you going to do for them and for the communities in which they live? You've had nothing to say so far; not an ounce of responsibility, not an ounce of compassion. What are you going to do for them?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Apparently, the champion of the working people here has undergone some kind of a conversion on the road to becoming leader of the official opposition. But, again, in 2002, when he presided over a

company that laid off people by the hundreds on an annual basis, he said at that time, "It's a sign of the times. Most businesses today are finding that they have to reduce their costs and that includes, unfortunately" what he characterized as "people costs."

We have a real concern for the people of Ontario, particularly those in the manufacturing sector, who are being displaced as a result of contractions and consolidations. What we are doing, and what we have done today—we made an announcement that our government has been able to do on behalf of the people of Ontario what no other government in the history of our province has ever been able to do: We've entered into a new labour market development agreement that will ensure we have hundreds of millions of dollars to provide better training and upgrade skills and get people back on their feet and back in the workforce as soon as we can.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I can wait.

New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Premier: Some 3,900 job cuts at General Motors and 525 job cuts at the Cascades paper mill in Thunder Bay in one day: These job losses are in addition to 42,000 manufacturing jobs lost in Ontario over the last year.

Your government will make a bad situation worse if you scrap the revenue cap on Ontario Power Generation's so-called unregulated generating assets, a move that experts warn could mean an absolutely drastic jump in hydro rates and more lost jobs.

So my question for you is this: Will the McGuinty government commit to the people of Ontario, here and now, to extend the Ontario Power Generation rate cap for at least another two years so that we don't see another huge jump in hydro rates and thousands more jobs lost?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'll refer this to the Minister of Energy.

1430

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): As I indicated to the member when he asked this question the other day, those discussions are currently underway.

Mr. Hampton: As the McGuinty government discusses and dithers, more corporations are announcing more job cuts in Ontario. This may not mean much to the McGuinty government, but I can tell you that for the thousands of auto assembly jobs, and the tens of thousands of auto parts jobs, and the thousands of pulp and paper workers who have been laid off already, this is the difference between having a job and not having a job at all.

My question, again, is this—don't dither. Companies are making the decisions as you dither, just as Cascades did. They looked at your so-called package to help the pulp and paper sector and said, "There's nothing here for us." It doesn't address electricity costs.

Will you announce, here and now today, that you're going to scrap your plan to end the Ontario Power Generation revenue cap? Will you do that so that we don't have thousands more jobs—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: It's fascinating: This question keeps coming from a government that actually collapsed from 11,700 to 6,600 jobs in northwestern Ontario in, guess what? The forestry, mining, oil and gas industries. We have done more in two years to address the issues in this province than they managed to do in five years, except, again, in northeastern Ontario they reduced their jobs from 27,700 to 21,700 and they closed 14 mills at the same time.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, your answer betrays the fact that you don't know much of the history. I was part of the government that repositioned 600 jobs.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I need to be able to hear the leader of the third party. Minister of Finance, order.

Leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: I was part of the government that repositioned 600 jobs at the Cascades mill in Thunder Bay in 1993 so they'd continue to have jobs until now, and 1,000 jobs at Kapuskasing—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Look, we're not going to do this. We need to have some respect for each other and for the Legislature. I need to be able to hear the leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: —and 600 jobs at St. Marys Paper in Sault Ste. Marie, and 22 sawmills, accounting for more than 4,000 jobs. Those were mills and jobs that were repositioned so that people continued to have work.

Now, what the pulp and paper sector particularly—I think also the steel sector—wants to know, is, is the McGuinty government going to continue the hydro rate cap, or are you going to scrap the hydro rate cap, see hydro rates go up another 20% and kill thousands more jobs? Quit dithering. Answer today: Are you going to extend it or not?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: A thousand people a week lost their jobs under this government. I can't believe that these questions are coming, when you look—do you call that reconstruction? I lived through that social contract. The education system lived through that social contract. That may be reconstruction to you, but I assure you that it was a loss to a lot of other people.

Three billion dollars' worth of new construction and new investment and employment in this province through our initiatives in 9,000 megawatts alone: That's 5,000 construction jobs. We even had DMI, who just came from North Dakota to set up a new manufacturing plant for the wind industry in Fort Erie. I indicated to this member not once, not twice but three times that those discussions are underway, and they are underway.

LOW-INCOME ONTARIANS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Today, the Ontario Association of Food Banks said that a growing number of Ontarians are hungry for change: 338,563 Ontarians used food banks this year, an increase of 4.8% since last year;

144,234 of them were children. That's an increase of 11.7% since last year—a rising number—and 14.5% of all food bank users are the working poor.

Premier, this is unacceptable. Child hunger in Ontario is growing. You were the Premier who said, "Choose change." Poor children are hungry for change. Where's the change, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I want to remind my friend opposite that when the NDP were in office, one in five children were on welfare.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: They don't want to hear that. We lost 1,000 jobs every single month—every single month.

We have made significant investments in improving quality of life for our least fortunate. We've raised the minimum wage twice, on its way to \$8 per hour. We've increased rates for people who find themselves on social assistance and ODSP by 3%. We've increased student assistance for over 135,000 Ontarians. We established a \$10-million rent bank. We put in place a \$2-million emergency hydro assistance fund.

There is more work to do. I can say that those kinds of concerns that the member is raising weigh heavily on us. We look forward to breathing more life into those at the time—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, while you're congratulating yourself, this is what the report says. The report is entitled the Ontario Hunger Report, and it identifies seven factors, some of which you pat yourself on the back for: decreasing incomes; employment cutbacks; rapidly rising household expenses, particularly energy cost; erosion of benefits; poverty among single parents and children; inadequate social assistance relative to the poverty line; and a continued increase in new Canadians in poverty.

These are the people to whom you said, "Choose change." These are the people whom you told a McGuinty government would produce change for them. What they're asking is, where's the change? Where's the plan from the McGuinty government?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): We appreciate very much the organizations that were here today that represent hard-working volunteers and staff, who work every day for the benefit of people who struggle in Ontario today. We applaud them for the work they do. They do it sincerely and with meaning.

The other day I was in Sudbury speaking to an individual who runs the food banks for the Sudbury areas. It is a growing trend and a concerning one that more people are working two minimum wage jobs and still the families need to go to food banks.

But let me remind this party, whose federal cousins are busy trying to take down the government that just

tabled tax relief for these same families—things that would benefit low-income Canadians, and yet you stand here like some kind of hero while your party is busy hurting these same people. I think you need to get back to the table and join with us as a party when we try to benefit low-income Ontarians.

Mr. Hampton: The McGuinty government must be referring to those pre-election promises. I think people in Ontario know what to expect from Liberal pre-election promises.

This is what the food banks say: “Government programs designed to assist children living in poverty in Ontario have not met their intended aim; 119,066 families in Ontario were eligible for the national child benefit this year. All of these families had that benefit clawed back” By whom? By the McGuinty government. Then, in a move out of the Harris Conservative playbook, you cut off malnourished people’s access to the special diet supplement.

During the election, Premier, you told these families you would end the clawback of the national child benefit. You said it was immoral to claw back money from the lowest-income people. When are you going to—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister.
1440

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Let me say right off the bat, you are dead wrong. Number one, when we clawed through over \$37 million on the national child benefit, you voted against it. When we more than doubled nutritional programs for children in schools, you voted against it. When we increased the minimum wage for low-income working Ontarians, you voted against it.

You need to have more credibility to be asking questions about poor people in Ontario. Instead, join with us as we work together. We acknowledge that more work needs to be done. We are determined to help people in Ontario, especially those who need help, especially low-income Ontarians.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): To the Minister of Agriculture: Yesterday morning at the Ontario Federation of Agriculture convention, you did leave enough time for one question. I’d like to ask that question again: When will Premier McGuinty, with an elected majority government, empower you to fund the grains and oilseeds proposal? Please don’t tell us you’re waiting for the federal government, because we know the federal government won’t be acting any time soon.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): First of all, I’d like to say to the honourable member that I did indicate to the OFA folks yesterday that I would be prepared to come back. I was going to rearrange my schedule so I could come back and answer their questions, and they were not able to accommodate that. I was very sorry about that because I did want to have the opportunity to address the important issues they did bring to our attention.

With respect to the grains and oilseeds proposal, the unified voice proposal, I would say to you that integral to that proposal, in their ask, is that we work together as partners to address the issue of all grains and oilseeds and other sectors that are in need. Their needs are not being met by the business risk management program that’s in place at the present time. They’ve made it very clear that the producers, the provincial government and the federal government all have to be at the table in order to make this work.

Mr. Barrett: Minister, we know the feds aren’t going to be doing anything soon. And you’re right: Other sectors are in trouble, not only cash crop but also beef, tobacco and hort. They all have funding proposals on your desk. We know the feds aren’t part of this co-operation right now. Again, why would the federal government ante up to a plan that you don’t really seem committed to? Farmers don’t have time to wait. Minister, the question remains: Will you take action? Will your government take unilateral action, find the funding now for cash crop, beef, tobacco and fruit and vegetable, and then meet with the federal government later and negotiate their share or their co-operation?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: We are listening to those in the agriculture sector, to our agriculture partners, who have made it very clear to us that we are looking for a long-term plan to bring stability to this very important sector in our society. I have committed to them to work with them and the federal government, but make clear that the participation of the federal government is absolutely essential. The producers in the province know that and expect it. I would suggest that perhaps the honourable member might want to check his e-mail, because I am of the understanding that the federal government actually did make an announcement this morning.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, last night I had the privilege and honour of spending an evening with the people in the Jane-Finch community and I had the honour of sleeping under their roof that same night. I understand from them that the night before, you were in another public housing development and that you too spent the evening under their roof.

I want to tell what you I witnessed. I witnessed apartments in shoddy condition. I saw air circulation that didn’t work. I saw dirty carpets. I smelled urine in the hallways. My shower didn’t work in the morning. But most disgusting were the bars on the window in the recreation centre that the youth had to use. I have a simple question to you: Would you want your family to live in conditions like this?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Let me first of all say that the member is quite correct; I too spent an evening—at Moss

Park, actually. I want to thank the people there whom I met with both on Monday night and during the evening for their hospitality. I certainly got a much better insight into the kind of issues that they face on a day-to-day basis. I also sensed a sense of community and camaraderie amongst the people that I met.

There's no question about the fact that something has to be done about upgrading the social housing that currently exists out there. We have already made advances to the federal minister of housing on a number of occasions to make sure that there is going to be enough funding available to upgrade these housing communities, especially with respect to the legacy funding that is available as the mortgages get paid down, to leave the balance of funding there so that there is a steady stream of money available in order to make sure that the public housing—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): Minister, I also spent last night in Toronto community housing. People told me directly that when they leave work, they want to come home to a place that is safe, secure and livable, just like you and me. The province downloaded aging social housing to municipalities without funding for maintenance and upgrading, and you know that. Across Toronto, that's 164,000 people living in 58,000 units that are falling apart. Now, there's an ever-increasing \$224-million repair bill that morally, Minister, you cannot ignore. You have seen it yourself. We want answers today, Minister. I'm returning to my unit tonight. Can I tell them that you will be cutting the cheque immediately to fix up their homes?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: This government has done more than has been done over the last 15 years when it comes to affordable housing. As you know, last April we signed an agreement with the federal government in which over \$300 million of provincial taxpayers' money was made available to match the same amount of money that the feds have put in for affordable housing. That money is both for housing allowances and for new affordable housing that is being built and has been built already.

Returning to the issue that the member has raised, there's no question about it: If we want to maintain the social housing stock that's out there, it's going to be necessary to upgrade that. We're working on that on a day-to-day basis, both within our own ministries and with the federal government as well, to make sure that there's sufficient funding available in due course so that these buildings can be made secure and safe and so that they can be great places to live for the people who actually live there.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. First, congratulations on today's announcement of the Canada-Ontario labour

market agreements. Once again, you have succeeded in ensuring that the concerns of Ontario's workers and businesses are not only heard but addressed as well.

Minister, you recently announced this government's Ontario trust for student support program. This program will provide \$50 million every year to post-secondary institutions, providing bursaries to assist those students in financial need. Congratulations to you and the Premier on this initiative.

Due to massive tuition increases and student assistance cuts by the previous two governments, it has become more difficult for students and their parents to afford post-secondary education—education essential for successful career opportunities. There are businesses and individuals in the community willing to donate money for bursaries, but they want guarantees that students will get the greatest benefit from their dollars. Minister, can you tell us how our government's plan will ensure this?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I would like to thank the member for Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh for the question and for his advocacy on behalf of the students and families in his riding. He speaks often at his beloved St. Lawrence College, and to the students who go to other post-secondary institutions. The Ontario trust for student support is \$50 million a year, every year, to leverage individual and corporate donations. This is how it works: For the institutions that get donations, the government will match the dollars one for one, but for some it gets even better than that. For some institutions, and St. Lawrence College happens to be one of those, they've had challenges over the years in raising funds, so the government will provide them additional three-to-one matching for those dollars. What will this do? These monies go into an endowment. We'll have another 4,000 to 5,000 bursaries made available every single, solitary year for students, to assist them in their educational needs. That's good for access, good for the constituents in Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh and good for the students of Ontario.

1450

Mr. Brownell: Thank you for the explanation. I know there are students across this province applauding this message of hope, knowing this government is providing another tool to assist them in furthering their education. The McGuinty government has shown time and time again its commitment to student success and achievement in this province. I know my caucus colleagues believe all students should have access to higher learning opportunities based on their abilities, not on the size of their pocketbooks. Minister, could you explain to my constituents and to those in this House some of the other innovative measures this government has taken to allow students from across Ontario better access to our post-secondary education system?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: First of all, what we did in the last budget was to make an additional—extra—\$1.5 billion available over the next five years for student assistance, after many years when student assistance hadn't been

increased. What have we done in the first year? We restored the access grants for low-income families that the NDP cut in the early 1990s. We're giving up to 32,000 access grants to first- and second-year students—not loans; grants for access.

Secondly, you heard about the Ontario trust for student support, but additionally, we started to recognize additional student costs in the OSAP program. For example, you didn't have any allowance in calculating the need for a computer. Virtually every student needs a computer. We've recognized the cost. We raised the weekly loan allowance limits for the first time in a dozen years. That was time. There is more to do and we've got four more years of extra money to do it. It will be good for students, good for the students in your riding and good for the people of Ontario.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): Mr Speaker, my question was going to be for natural resources, but I think he's missing in action today. I think he had to go somewhere, unfortunately. He's not on the list as being away. Since he's not here, I guess I'll send my question to the Premier, since he's the boss and he'll be able to answer this.

Premier, while you were away in China on your last trip, we had a problem here. One of your ministries made a mistake and sent an order to the wrong people. It should have gone to the Minister of Natural Resources. They ended up sending it to a municipality, wanting the municipality to fix a river that belongs to the province. I asked the Minister of Natural Resources the other day and he tried to put it off to the Ministry of the Environment, which can't answer the question. He sent me a letter. In his letter, he states that the rivers aren't really under the mandate of natural resources.

I would like you, Premier, to explain to us when that was taken out of the mandate for natural resources.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): That should be sent to the assistant to the Minister of the Environment.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): We'll try to give the member opposite all the action he needs. I happen to have a copy of the letter from the minister, the same one he gave to you. It seems to me to be very clear. "With regard to erosion," which is the issue that was raised, "conservation authorities have responsibility for erosion control and have considerable experience dealing with watercourse erosion problems. I encourage the municipality to continue to work with the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority in this matter."

It seems to be very clear that it's an issue before the conservation authority. I know you're sending this over to the Minister of Natural Resources. I think his answer is very clear. We continue to note that the community of Neustadt, as part of West Grey, has failed to apply for COMRIF, round 2, funding for what we consider to be a very serious matter. We note that, given the fact that the provincial order has been stayed for the temporary period

right now, there should be a willingness on all sides to come together to resolve this very serious problem.

Mr. Murdoch: I guess we can't get someone to really answer the question. We got a lot of ramble there, and yes, I agree with Mr. Ramsay's letter where it says that the conservation authorities are much brighter than natural resources. We've known that for a long time.

The conservation authorities are funded through natural resources. So now, after hearing from the parliamentary assistant for environment that they want to fund this, I wanted to ask the Minister of Natural Resources, then, would he consider today funding this project? That's where conservation authorities get their money: from natural resources. Since rivers, as I understand it, should still be under the mandate of natural resources, even though you people don't want to agree with that, fish, I think, are still under the mandate of natural resources. There are a lot of fish in this river.

I guess it would still have to go back to the Premier: Will you fund this project if the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority asks you for the funding?

Mr. Wilkinson: Let's just try to get the history straight on this. The reason that community has the sewage lagoon in question is because your government downloaded it to the community. That's what started it. When you had the same job that I have today as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, what did you do about that for the good people of Neustadt? Absolutely nothing, other than the fact that you have rhetoric.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. I'm going to have to name the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Please come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Wilkinson: I agree that the member opposite has the right to ask a minister of the crown a question. It doesn't seem that you want to accept his answer, as Minister of Natural Resources, where he writes clearly, in plain English, that it goes to the conservation authority. It's that simple.

Mr. Murdoch: It's your river. You should be paying for it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I name the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Mr. Murdoch.

Mr. Murdoch was escorted from the chamber.

MINISTER OF HEALTH'S COMMENTS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Premier: Premier, are anger management classes covered by OHIP?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm not sure they are, but I might be able to make an exception for the member.

Mr. Kormos: Last night, a popular television show mocked Ontario's optometrists because your Minister of Health called optometrists a bunch of terrorists. The Comedy Network's Colbert Report put Canadian optometrists at number 4 on its "threat down" list of North America's most clear and present dangers. Said host Stephen Colbert, "Bravo, sir. Optometrists are a menace."

1500

I know the Minister of Health considers himself a media star, but surely this is the kind of media exposure that Ontario and Ontario optometrists can do without.

Premier, before your minister says something else he regrets and causes Ontario and our health professionals more international embarrassment, will you commit today to ensuring that your Minister of Health himself is enrolled in anger management classes?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me just say how proud we all are, here in government, of the wonderful work that is being done by George Smitherman, our Minister of Health. There is no doubt about it: There is no shortage of enthusiasm that Minister Smitherman brings to his work, but I can tell you it all is informed by a spirit and a sentiment of commitment to improving the quality of health care for all Ontarians. He will proceed, I know that, as enthusiastically as he possibly can to ensure that we can improve the quality of services for all Ontarians.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I want to congratulate the minister and the Premier for securing this week a historic immigration agreement for the province of Ontario that will see \$920 million in new funding to assist newcomers, something neither of the two previous governments were able to deliver.

I know that you and our government have recognized the economic advantages that highly educated and skilled immigrants represent, and have negotiated this historic agreement with the federal government to ensure that those who choose Ontario as their new home receive the important services that they need.

While the north does not receive nearly as many immigrants as the GTA, I want to say that we welcome their talents and skills and hope more will choose to settle in northern Ontario.

Minister, what does this immigration agreement mean for those newcomers who have chosen northern Ontario as their home?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): As you know, this unprecedented ground-breaking agreement, which all Ontario governments have been trying to get for over 25 years, is going to mean that newcomers are finally going to get the resources that they need to integrate and be part of a successful Ontario.

The interesting part of this agreement is that one of the strategies in here is to have a partnership with our municipalities so that we'll be able to highlight the attrac-

tive features in all Ontario communities, especially the north—great places like Sault Ste. Marie, with affordable housing and welcoming people. They'll be able to showcase why newcomers, when choosing to come to Ontario, should look at the north—at Sudbury, at Sault Ste. Marie—as a great place to bring their investments and to bring their creativity. It's very much part of our plan.

Mr. Oraziotti: I know that the newcomers who have selected the north as their new home will appreciate the additional funding for settlement and language services from this agreement.

As you know, helping to create economic opportunities in northern Ontario is a constant challenge, but we've recently heard from the Minister of Northern Development and Mines about a major mining announcement that will bring millions of dollars of new investment to Ontario and hundreds of new jobs.

However, as a province, we continue to experience shortages of people with specific training and education. The birth rate is not increasing, and growth now depends on immigration in the north, as it does for the rest of the province.

Minister, what will the immigration agreement do to help northern communities attract immigrants with the skill sets and training that we need?

Hon. Mr. Colle: One of the things that this new immigration agreement will enable us to do is to profile different communities to prospective immigrants overseas who are looking to come to Ontario, so that they can choose and be more familiar with the opportunities.

Traditionally, we know the great impact immigrants have had in Mississauga and Markham, but along with the federal government, what we're saying is, there are incredible opportunities in communities all across Ontario, whether it be Cornwall in the east, where you can do business in French or English, or whether it be in Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay or Sudbury. You can have university for your children. The infrastructure is already there: hospitals are there and schools are there. The people of the north are so welcoming. This investment of \$920 million will mean more successful immigrants will make Sault Ste. Marie their home and will be welcomed in the north. It's great news for the north and it's great news for our newcomers.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Ontario is reeling. Over 40 companies have either shut down or are laying off significant numbers of employees. You've been back from China for one week. Minister, when you were in China, did your missionaries write any business while they were there? Is there any ray of hope for Ontario in that area?

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I'm very proud to announce that the trip to China, with the leadership of the Premier,

was a huge success for Ontario. We met with many different groups. There were in fact a number of signings. Some 30 contracts were signed while we were there. But more importantly, we were seeking to reach out to the Chinese and say that we are open for business, that we're interested in two-way investment. We met with many diverse companies that are interested in investing in North America. I think that will prove to be very successful in the months to come.

Mr. Chudleigh: After a week, I would have thought the minister may have reported to the House on the success of this mission and may have had a dollar figure associated with how much business was written. If there's a dollar figure associated with how much business was written, Ontarians could make a determination as to whether this was a successful trade mission or not.

In talking about how successful this trade mission is, I wonder if you could tell me how much this trade mission cost the taxpayers of Ontario.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: This comes from a member who was part of a government that for the longest time did nothing about attracting foreign investment to this province. In fact, during that government's time in office, direct foreign investment as a percentage of world share dropped in half. So you had a pathetic record when it comes to attracting investment from abroad.

What we are doing is reversing that. You were missing in action on the foreign front, and we're moving forward. We're expanding our in-market centres to four additional in-market centres—these will be happening very shortly—one in London, one in Tokyo, one in New Delhi and one in Los Angeles. Indeed, there are going to be additional investments being made by the Chinese in Canada.

We don't have a figure for you today, but you can FOI that. I'm sure you've already considered doing that. That will be made available in due course in terms of its costs.

COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Premier. The Ministry of Health has targeted some 30 hospital-based crises and treatment programs run by St. Joseph's Health Care in London to be divested to community-based agencies in southwestern Ontario. The hospital says the decisions were made without any consultation, clinical input or assessment of the staff and expertise in the community to deal with patients who suffer from serious, persistent mental illness. Doctors and psychiatrists at St. Joseph's confirm that the decision to divest 11 ACT teams from the hospital to the community run counter to recommendations made by the South West Mental Health Implementation Task Force. Neither staff from the targeted programs nor the patients and their families who have an association with St. Joseph's have been consulted or involved in this process.

Premier, what is the government's plan to deal with these very serious concerns about these proposals and the divestment process?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I've just received some information about this. I am not personally familiar with the issue, but I can undertake to look into it on behalf of the member in the absence of the minister.

Let me say that our government has always been very clear that we support community governance and the shift to non-institutional community mental health. This is an ongoing process. Lots of work has been done over the past two years. We will continue to work to ensure that the shift to community governance will not compromise client needs.

Ms. Martel: It's that very compromising of client needs that the Premier needs to review. Let me share some more concerns with you. The hospital has said, "The ministry regional staff do not appear to appreciate the clinical and human resource implications for this move, particularly as it relates to the ACT programs." The doctors and psychiatrists at St. Joseph's have said, "These new actions on the part of the ministry are not in keeping with appropriate clinical care and, in the particular case of ACT services, will have serious negative consequences for patients and the mental health system."

1510

Your own colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London, Mr. Peters, has written to the minister on four occasions now and said, "Over the past months, I have met with various stakeholders who have different perspectives on this matter and I have come to the conclusion that the serious nature of the concerns brought to me and my London-area and southwest region MPP colleagues deserve to be fully addressed by our government as soon as possible."

Premier, where's the plan to deal with the serious concerns associated with this divestment?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, our intention is to ensure that patient needs are in no way compromised by this initiative. I think that patients in particular and their families can draw some confidence from the fact that our commitment in this area has been very significant. We've invested \$185 million over four years to allow 78,600 more Ontarians to receive care in the community. I understand the concerns raised by the member opposite, but I would ask her to have some confidence in our intention, in our determination to ensure that we complete this initiative in a way that does not compromise, but indeed enhances, quality of care for patients.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): My question is to the Minister of Energy. The public has seen report after report which shows the negative effect coal has on the health of Ontario's people and its economy—increased asthma attacks, increased hospital visits, increased sick days, and many of these are linked to the burning of coal. In fact, I've had a number of parents who have come into my office with their children who have health effects because of this, and they have asked me, is our gov-

ernment still committed to the closure of coal-burning plants? I've said, "Yes, we are."

Minister, you made an announcement this week about wind energy. I'd like you to share with the House and the people of Ontario how that announcement will benefit all of us.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I'd like to thank the member from Niagara Falls for his question. I'd also like to thank him for his dedication to his community and his commitment to clean, renewable energy. As you know, within the member's community we have invested \$1 billion in a new tunnel for Niagara, which will create 1.6 million kilowatt hours of new, clean, renewable energy for the Niagara region.

I reiterate that our commitment to coal is firm. There is no such thing as clean coal, and there is no question that there is a significant increase in smog-related respiratory issues, in addition to the climate change challenges that face us. We had 1,000 megawatts that we asked for; we actually received proposals for 2,200 megawatts. Out of that, we accepted 975 megawatts, eight of which were wind and one was hydroelectric. It adds to the 9,000 currently under way, in addition to the 2,200. We are delighted with our opportunity to build in this province new generation of clean, renewable energy.

Mr. Craitor: Not only was the announcement a positive step toward replacing coal-burning generation, which will help air quality in Ontario, it's also good news for our economy. I know that jobs are being created in the Niagara region to help support the need for wind turbines. This proves that we don't have to choose between the environment, our health and the economy. This proves that we can achieve a balance that will help all three of these areas. Minister, how is our commitment to clean energy creating new jobs and industries in Ontario?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Our first 394 megawatts of clean, renewable energy brought in \$700 million to this economy; our second request for 975 brought in just under \$2 billion to this economy. That's a creation of approximately 5,000 construction jobs and obviously a number of permanent jobs. In addition to that, as I mentioned earlier, DMI from North Dakota will be locating one of their wind turbine manufacturing plants in Fort Erie. That's 100 jobs, and they are already talking about expansion. We know they've invested in Ontario because it's a good place to invest, and it's a good place to invest because we have a strong strategy on how we're going to build new generation, maximize our existing generation and transmission, and create that culture of conservation.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): In the absence of the Minister of Health, I'm going to direct my question to the Premier. On October 25, we asked your Minister of Health to guarantee that not one cent of provincial taxpayer money would go to fund drug-consumption sites. He refused to answer the question, saying, "There is no such proposal before any municipi-

palities in Ontario," and, "There is no ongoing discussion in any jurisdiction in Ontario" that he was aware of.

These discussions are in fact going on in at least two Ontario municipalities. Ottawa is currently conducting a study, and on December 5, Toronto city council will be considering a request from the board of health to prioritize a needs assessment and feasibility study for consumption sites. Premier, once again, will you guarantee today that not one cent of provincial money will go to funding these so-called drug-consumption sites?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I appreciate the question, and I'm happy to take it in the absence of the Minister of Health. My understanding is that this issue is one that falls under the purview of our municipalities and it's up to them to consider these issues. I would fully expect that they would weigh the advice they get from the police against the advice they might get from community and social workers, and that they would use their very best judgment when they make a call on this. But it is not the kind of thing over which we have immediate responsibility; it's the kind of thing that fundamentally rests with our municipalities.

PETITIONS

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I have this petition signed by many people in my riding:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I support this petition, I sign it and I send it down.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: During question period, the member from Beaches-East York made a reference to the area of Jane and Finch because he found a dirty carpet and no hot water in the morning. I would like to say that I take this as a personal—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): That is not a point of order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for York West will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for York West—stop the clock.

Petitions: the member for Scarborough Southwest.

1520

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the McGuinty government has committed to a new multi-year increase of \$6.2 billion in colleges and universities;

“Whereas 178,000 new jobs have been created since the McGuinty government took office;

“Whereas the McGuinty government introduced the apprenticeship tax credit in order to encourage employers to participate in developing a highly skilled workforce; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government has invested \$12.5 million this year to assisting internationally trained individuals gain recognition in order to join the workforce;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To support the McGuinty government’s commitment to ensure that Ontario has the best skilled workforce and the strongest economy.”

I support this petition. I affix my signature to it and give it to page Zoë.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): I have a petition from my riding of Durham.

“Whereas electricity is an essential public commodity that must be assured to all residents, including the elderly and people on fixed income;

“Whereas the citizens of the province of Ontario pay more for electricity under Dalton McGuinty’s government since they broke their promise to preserve the price cap on electricity;

“Whereas in April 2004 the Liberals increased the electricity rate to 4.7 cents per kilowatt hour for the first 750 kilowatt hours in a month, and 5.5 cents for additional hours, and prices are estimated to increase in 2005 to reflect the true cost of electricity,” which is more;

“Whereas it is important that the electricity price remain affordable for residential consumers, especially those with low and fixed incomes;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government commit to enacting income-contingent legislation that will protect residential

consumers, especially seniors and individuals on fixed incomes, from further outrageous price increases” for electricity.

I am pleased to support this on behalf of the vulnerable people in my riding, and present it to Kumail.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay—Superior North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

Therefore, “we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I support this petition and I’m happy to sign it.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly. It’s similar to a lot of the petitions that have been presented to the Legislature on behalf of the intellectually disabled community. Hopefully, as more of these petitions come forward, the Minister of Finance will be listening.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I affix my signature.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I’m pleased to join with my colleague the member for Niagara Falls

in this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by a number of people in the Niagara area. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program."

It's my privilege to support and sign this petition and to ask page Laura to carry it for me.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I affix my signature to this.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure

that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I have affixed my signature with enthusiasm and send this to the clerk's table with Alexandre Lafontaine.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions about the dilapidated bridge at Old Weston Road. It's addressed to the Parliament, the minister of infrastructure services and the Minister of Transportation, and reads as follows:

"Whereas GO Transit is presently planning to tunnel an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West ... making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing;

"Whereas TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair Avenue-Old Weston Road bridge;

"Whereas this bridge ... will be: (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will have only one lane for traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it's about 50 metres long). It's dark and slopes on both east and west sides creating high banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. (This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West, thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge with its high banks and blank walls. Instead it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow."

I agree with this petition 100% and I'm delighted to sign it.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services; and

"Whereas abandoning support for these services will place greater demand on other health care sectors such as physicians, emergency wards and after-hours clinics; and

"Whereas no Ontario citizen should be denied access to necessary medical care because of lack of funds;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services and restore funding for those important" services as soon as possible.

I'm pleased to support this on behalf of those persons who can't afford those services that the McGuinty government has delisted.

1530

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'm pleased to join with my colleague the member from Peterborough in this petition, signed by a number of people from the Peterborough area. I certainly urge the people in Peterborough to make their petitions with a little bit larger type so that some of us with aging eyes can read them.

It is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers \$13 billion a year and increasing. It is the leading cause of death and hospitalization in Canada. Many people with diabetes cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing the disease. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood and even reuse lancets and needles. These cost-saving measures often have tumultuous and disastrous health consequences. Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes.

"We think it is in all Ontario's and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain optimum glucose control. Good blood glucose control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations."

This is a good petition. I am pleased to affix my signature to it and to ask the page, Stephen, to carry it for me.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): "Whereas four-year-old Allyceea Ennis died while travelling on a school bus on February 12, 2004;

"Whereas the safety of children in the province of Ontario is of utmost importance;

"Whereas Ontario school bus drivers are not required"—at the present time—"to have cardiac pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or first aid training;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Liberal government implement MPP John O'Toole's Bill 162, which would make it mandatory that all applicants for school bus drivers' licences in the province of Ontario complete a practical examination on CPR and first aid" to put our children's lives in safety.

I'm pleased to sign this on behalf of my constituents and those children in Ontario who need our support.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting the business of the House for this evening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed. Proceed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I thank the members.

I move that, notwithstanding any standing order, the House continue to meet beyond 6 o'clock for the purpose of completing consideration of the motion for second reading of Bill 210, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts, following which the Speaker shall adjourn the House until Thursday, November 24, 2005, at 10 a.m.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Caplan has moved that, notwithstanding any standing order—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker: Dispense. All those in favour? Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAMILY STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2005LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
DES QUESTIONS FAMILIALES

Mr. Bryant moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to amend the Arbitration Act, 1991, the Child and Family Services Act and the Family Law Act in connection with family arbitration and related matters, and to amend the Children's Law Reform Act in connection with the matters to be considered by the court in dealing with applications for custody and access / Projet de loi 27, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur l'arbitrage, la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et la Loi sur le droit de la famille en ce qui concerne l'arbitrage familial et des questions connexes et modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance en ce qui concerne les questions que doit prendre en considération le tribunal qui traite des requêtes en vue d'obtenir la garde et le droit de visite.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Bryant.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I'm pleased to begin second reading of the Family Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005. I'll be sharing my allotted speaking time today with the minister responsible for women's issues, the Honourable Sandra Pupatello, and the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General and member for Willowdale, David Zimmer.

Let me begin by thanking, applauding, acknowledging and recognizing the great work done by the minister responsible for women's issues, Sandra Pupatello, with whom I've worked on this particular issue for some time now.

The Family Statute Law Amendment Act would, if passed, make changes to the way family law matters are arbitrated in Ontario. The bill would, if passed, amend and improve the existing Arbitration Act and Family Law Act to ensure that all family law arbitrations are conducted exclusively under Ontario and Canadian law. That would mean resolutions based on any other laws and principles would not be family arbitrations. They would have no legal effect. They would amount to advice only.

Our government is proposing these changes because we believe that here in Ontario, diverse as we are as a society, we are all equal before the law and under the law.

Notre gouvernement agit aussi parce qu'il veut mieux protéger ceux qui choisissent de soumettre leurs litiges familiaux à l'arbitrage.

We know that, while these new rules and regulations would make a real difference, it is very important that they be effective. The way they are effective is to ensure that the people of this province know about them and understand them. So our government is also developing a community outreach and education program to ensure that all Ontarians will better understand their rights and their choices under Canadian and Ontario family law and family law arbitrations.

The Arbitration Act was introduced on March 27, 1991, by my colleague across the way, the leader of the third party, Howard Hampton, back when he was the Attorney General. The Arbitration Act, 1991, changed the way arbitrations were conducted in Ontario. It was passed unanimously on November 20, 1991—with all-party support. Mr. Hampton stated the purpose and thinking of the bill when it was introduced. Attorney General Hampton, back then, said this: "Arbitration is a good and accessible method of seeking resolution for many kinds of disputes. It can be more expedient and less costly than going to court. The parties can design their own procedures and select appropriate arbitrators."

During second reading, future Attorney General Charles Harnick also spoke to the bill. He spoke in favour of the bill, saying, "The effect of the bill will be that it will take private disputes, civil actions, out of the court system. I think it will offer litigants a faster and less costly solution to their problems, ... free up the courts to do the work the courts must do and ... give the courts the opportunity to engage in matters that are not conducive to arbitration."

I went through the debate at the time to consider what the purpose of it was. I note that the justice critic for the New Democratic Party did speak against a part of the bill with respect to labour matters and arbitrations. Mr. Kormos had a concern with the bill—at least in the version that was before the House, and perhaps it was

amended to Mr. Kormos's satisfaction—as it affected labour arbitrations. He spoke to that. But I didn't see any of his remarks on family arbitrations, which, to be fair, was because Howard Hampton was the Attorney General of the day.

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The 1991 bill introduced by Mr. Hampton had no regulation-making powers in it. The power to pass regulations was not in the bill. So the suggestion that has been made recently by the leader of the third party that we could have effected this by way of regulation is not accurate. There were no regulation-making powers in the bill.

Secondly, the leader of the third party now says that the 1991 bill somehow envisions certain protections that we are now bringing forth here today. If those protections were in that 1991 bill, I don't think we would have had the No Religious Arbitration Coalition, the no shariah law arbitration coalition, and the concern expressed by people around the world about how the 1991 act was being used.

If that were the case and those protections were in that bill, then we would not have asked Marion Boyd, a former Attorney General under the New Democratic government, someone who's a former minister responsible for women's issues and someone certainly with some expertise in terms of vulnerable women in her pre-political life, during her political life and after that. So I don't think it's fair to say that the 1991 bill had those protections in it.

Then the question becomes, what new protections do we need? The proposed changes that we've put forward have been considered closely by many of the people who have engaged in this issue in a very meaningful way. Since we introduced the bill on November 15, we've received some very esteemed support, and I thank those people for their support and for the time that they put into this issue.

The No Religious Arbitration Coalition, comprised of over 100 agencies and groups, and a number of individuals have told us that they welcome the proposed changes. I should also point out that the coalition includes the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, which was one of the leaders in expressing concerns about family arbitrations under the existing laws. Pamela Cross, the coalition co-chair, says that the coalition is pleased to find substantive legal changes in our bill, which will go a long way to ensuring that women's rights are protected. Many of the province's top family law lawyers have told us that they support the bill, and have suggested that it is the right way to go.

The Muslim Canadian Congress has also put out a release and indicated their support for this new legislation, calling on both the opposition and the third party to permit the bill to go to an up-and-down vote in an expeditious fashion.

The Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children and the Ontario Women's Justice Network believe this is strong and positive law

reform. They say, "This legislation will make a material difference to women and children involved in the resolution of family disputes." They urge all members of the Legislature to support this bill and ensure that it passes in a timely fashion.

Many of our stakeholders applaud the fact that our proposal would allow for arbitration to remain a cost-effective, timely and accessible dispute resolution method for Ontarians to use when dealing with family law matters. They tell us they're pleased that our proposal would make a meaningful difference when it comes to protecting vulnerable Ontarians, namely women and children of this province.

I want to take a moment to address some of the concerns raised, particularly those that have been raised from across the floor. I know that the official opposition has indicated that they support this bill, but that they feel that the government should have resolved this in a more timely fashion. I hope that same spirit of moving along with due dispatch applies to their position with respect to the movement of this bill through the Legislature.

It is true that we've been examining this issue very closely. Marion Boyd's review was all in, I believe, some six months long. She heard from almost 50 groups and dozens of individuals, and presented us with a report containing no less than 46 recommendations. We obviously took the time to review Ms. Boyd's recommendations in her report to create amendments to the Arbitrations Act that would be effective, address the issues at hand, and make a real and significant difference. A number of her recommendations, at the behest of the advice that she received in her report, are found in this bill, but we also took the time to review and analyze and consider the input we received from Ontarians subsequent to our receipt of the Boyd report. We took the time to get it right.

I don't want to let this moment pass without thanking Marion Boyd for not only the time and energy she put into it, but for the public service she put into it. This, as far as I'm concerned, was a vintage effort from someone who has dedicated herself to these issues her entire life, and I thank her for putting her name in the public arena and taking the time she did to hear from the people she did in providing the usual exhaustive and thoughtful approach to this issue that she has brought to many others.

We don't believe that banning family law arbitrations is the answer. I should say that we're not alone.

The family bar, including a number of women's advocates, have told us that they want to be able to arbitrate family matters. They say that prohibiting all forms of family law arbitration would do a disservice to their clients and set family law back some 15 years.

In the Boyd report, and I'm quoting from page 36 here, she writes this: "In one consultation with representatives of the family law section of the Ontario Bar Association and the Advocates' Society, the review"—that is her review—"was told that removing the option to arbitrate family law matters would, 'be a disaster,

pushing the development of family law back 30 years.'" I believe it was Philip Epstein who said that, acknowledged by many as being one of the leading, if not the leading, family lawyer in the province.

During the consultation with the Law Society of Upper Canada, one lawyer made the point that with arbitration, the parties, with the advice of their lawyers, can choose an arbitrator who is an expert in family law, and pointed out a number of benefits to the family law process.

It's our position that removing family law arbitration altogether would in fact leave our system in a situation where people were not getting appropriate access to justice. That was the very purpose of the 1991 bill in the first place. The very purpose of the bill was to build upon the principles of alternative dispute resolution and to recognize that the court was not the only place that could deliver justice to Ontarians.

It was in the name of that that the leader of the third party, then-Attorney General Howard Hampton, introduced that bill, and sold that bill to the Legislature. Certainly, that was not with respect to just any arbitration; that includes family law arbitrations. I agree with Howard Hampton when he said that "family law arbitrations do provide a just and appropriate and flexible and timely and accessible way to achieve a result at the end of the dissolution of a relationship that is in the best interests of Ontarians and their children."

I look forward to the comments from the justice critic and Mr. Hampton as to how they feel about the 1991 bill now, and how they feel about family law arbitrations altogether.

We have no evidence that family law arbitrations are rendering injustice; no evidence at all. There's nothing in the Boyd report and no one has come forward and said, "Here are the injustices being visited upon people as a result of family law arbitration." That's why those who work in this area say that getting rid of family law arbitration altogether would set back our family law system some 15 years. I take that advice.

Some people have expressed concern that this bill, if passed, would allow for the reopening of many cases where spousal support or child custody have been resolved, sometimes for years. They say our courts will be flooded, the concern is, with people looking to change what's been settled. I want to assure Ontarians there is nothing in this bill that in fact would effect that, and that this simply will not happen. The bill preserves the right to appeal a family arbitration award, and the parties would not be able to waive that right. They have to exercise that right within 30 days of the arrival of the arbitration itself. There's no retroactive provision in this bill for appeals or otherwise.

What would change is that family arbitration agreements would be able to be challenged in the courts in the same way that domestic separation agreements can be challenged under the current law. That's not the way it worked under the 1991 bill. We're bringing the arbi-

tration system under the protections under the Family Law Act.

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Arbitration agreements, in that sense, would not be completely and unnecessarily final but could be subject to court review under certain prescribed circumstances in the same way that separation agreements can. For example, an arbitration agreement could be subject to review by a court if there has been a material change in circumstances in the support cases, if the amount provided for the arbitration support is unconscionable or if it's revealed at a later date that full financial disclosure was not made by a party before the arbitration. These are the protections that are in place for separation agreements, and they should be in place for family law arbitration agreements. If this bill passes, they will be in place.

Most people who have entered into such arrangements in the past comply with arbitrations and awards just as they comply with their separation agreements. I would submit to you that the McGuinty government's proposed legislation strikes the right balance of allowing a useful dispute resolution process to continue while ensuring that it occurs only under Canadian law and all of its protections. We need to make it clear that when it comes to family matters, arbitration can be a useful dispute method.

I urge members to heed the call from many that this legislation is needed; heed the call that we need to put this matter forward in an expeditious fashion to ensure that, yes, it gets the debate it is getting here today, but also ensure that Ontarians are better protected when it comes to family law, so that we can ensure that family law matters in this province are governed exclusively by one law, and that is Canadian law.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Thank you, Speaker, and today as well minister responsible for women's issues.

I'm delighted to join the Attorney General in speaking to this bill that has been tabled before this House. I will also be joined by his parliamentary assistant, Mr. Zimmer, who has also been working diligently on this issue. I want to thank them for allowing me some of their time.

As the minister responsible for women's issues, I am pleased with the tremendous support that women's groups have given us in terms of how they have closely watched the government dealing with this issue, since it certainly has become one in the last several months.

We have heard from those seeking greater protections for women.

I am happy to say that in addition to the proposed legislation, we, through the Ontario Women's Directorate, will be working with women's groups to develop new community outreach and education programs to better inform Ontarians about family law and arbitration. We want to make sure that vulnerable people in com-

munities across the province understand that only the decisions conducted exclusively in accordance with Ontario and Canadian law are enforceable, if in fact this legislation is passed.

Les Ontariennes et Ontariens méritent d'avoir un système judiciaire qui soit facilement accessible et facile à comprendre.

Our government wants to make sure that all people, especially vulnerable women, have the information they need to make the best choices offered to them by Canadian family law.

I've met with women from marginalized communities. Some of these women are susceptible to coercion; some of these women are subject to family and community pressures; and some of these women, either out of fear or lack of information, may make decisions that go against their best interests and the best interests of their children. By increasing the availability of accurate legal information, we are reaching out to these women.

This proposed legislation gives us the opportunity to reflect on the importance of the rights that are guaranteed to all Ontarians and to all Canadians. The proposed legislation is one specific case, but it points to a greater, much more fundamental truth: It reminds Ontarians that our government is firmly and completely committed to equality principles and women's rights as guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Et elle nous permet de renouveler notre engagement consistant à faire tout en notre pouvoir pour garantir ces droits.

Section 15 of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms holds, "Every individual is equal before and under the law." Section 15 guarantees all individuals "the right to the equal protection ... of the law without discrimination." In particular, no discrimination may be "based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability." It's important that we remember that these rights belong to every Ontarian.

The best way our government can guarantee that people take possession of the charter is through appropriate legislation and public education. That's why we will work in partnership with women's groups and community groups to make sure we develop materials best suited to reach target audiences in vulnerable communities. Individual communities often know the best way to transmit information to reach their members. We want to make sure that the materials are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

Ce matériel est disponible dans plusieurs langues et sous différents formats. Il est écrit dans une langue simple—the availability in fully accessible formats for those with low literacy and those with disabilities, so that it serves all members of the diverse communities across the province.

The public education program I'm speaking of actually means empowerment. It is a means of allowing all residents to be full and active participants in the economic, social and cultural life of this province. The entire community benefits when a woman has the knowledge

and the confidence to make the choices that allow her to lead a life of her choosing. The entire community equally benefits when a woman can make choices that are in the best interests of children.

En tant que ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine, je suis heureuse que notre gouvernement prenne les mesures nécessaires à ce propos pour veiller à protéger les droits des femmes.

I will continue to look for the support of women's groups as our government continues to build an Ontario where all women are able to take full advantage of the rights afforded to them.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I'm pleased to speak to second reading of the Family Statute Law Amendment Act. I want to thank the Attorney General for sharing his time with me.

As the Attorney General said, this bill would, if passed, ensure that all family law arbitrations are conducted exclusively under Ontario and Canadian law. That would mean resolutions based on any other laws and principles would not be arbitrations; they would be advice only. Under this proposed legislation, Ontarians would still have the right to seek advice from any source in matters of family law, including religious leaders, but such advice would not be considered an arbitration and would not be enforceable by the courts.

This bill makes it clear, then, when it comes to arbitrating family law matters, that there is only one law, and that is Canadian law. You see, in a province with a mosaic as diverse as ours, we need to highlight and build on our common ground. That common ground, at least in part, is our law, our legal system. We need to ensure that when it comes to family law arbitrations, everyone who participates is equal and is protected by the same law. The McGuinty government believes that no matter where we have come from or how long we have been here, we must all be subject to the same law.

During our extensive consultations with Ontarians, which the Attorney General has outlined for you, we heard loud and clear from women and from people seeking greater protections for women and children. We have included a number of amendments in this act that, if passed, would better protect the vulnerable. For example, this legislation, if passed, would require that each party receive independent legal advice before making a family arbitration agreement. Right now, there is no such safeguard.

With this proposed legislation, we would ensure that the right to appeal cannot be waived, so that anyone who is not satisfied with the end result of the arbitration could take it before an Ontario court for review on a question of law. Currently, that right can be waived, which can only leave participants with little choice if they believe the end result to be unfair.

Our proposed law would also, for the first time, authorize the regulation of family law arbitrators. If this legislation is passed, we would make regulations so that all arbitrators would have to be members of a recognized dispute resolution organization. They would have to set out all of the arbitration agreements in writing, and they

would have to keep records and submit regular reports to the Ministry of the Attorney General.

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And, better to protect women from power and gender imbalances, our proposed legislation would insist that these regulated arbitrators be trained to recognize—

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The government doesn't even have a quorum to hear this speech, and I think it's an affront to the member for Willowdale. I wonder if you could check.

The Acting Speaker: Could you check for quorum.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The point of order is not well taken.

Please continue.

Mr. Zimmer: And, better to protect women from power and gender imbalances, our proposed legislation would insist that these regulated arbitrators be trained to recognize and screen for power imbalances and situations of domestic violence when the two parties come together to arbitrate.

This legislation would also prohibit advance agreements to arbitrate any future family law disputes. This would ensure that people would be able to deal with the family law issues, if and when they arise, using any method they choose. This would change the current system and mean that people would no longer find themselves locked into particular methods of resolution when family law matters arise.

Under this proposed legislation, all family arbitration decisions would have to be made in the best interests of the children. All arbitration awards relating to child custody and support could be reviewed by the court and set aside if they are found not to be in the best interests of the children involved.

Also, under our proposal, arbitrators would be held to the same standard as other professionals when it comes to reporting children in need of protection. Our legislation would amend the Child and Family Services Act to make it an offence for arbitrators not to report child abuse. And while we are talking about better protecting Ontario's children, I should point out that this act, if passed, would also amend the Children's Law Reform Act to ensure that violence and abuse are considered by the court when determining the best interests of a child when it comes to custody and access matters.

In order to ensure that this legislation is effective, we are developing new community outreach and education programs so that all Ontarians will better understand their rights when it comes to family law arbitrations in this province. The minister responsible for women's issues will provide the House with more details on these programs in a few moments.

As the Attorney General pointed out, our government is not alone in believing that this proposed legislation is needed and would be effective. We have heard from stakeholders, including the Muslim Canadian Congress,

the Canadian Congress of Muslim Women, the Ontario Bar Association, the Ontario provincial council of the Canadian Federation of University Women, and the No Religious Arbitration Coalition, which in itself is composed of a further 100 groups, agencies and individuals. All of these organizations support our proposed legislation. They say it would make real, significant and much-needed change to our current arbitration system.

I urge all members of this House to support this bill. The McGuinty government's Family Statute Law Amendment Act strikes the right balance. It allows a useful dispute resolution process to continue, while at the same time, it makes use of trained practitioners and ensures that all participants are protected and treated equally under one law: the Canadian law.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Baird: I am pleased to respond to the speeches. I would have thought that the Premier would be the lead-off speaker on this bill, because it was Dalton McGuinty who cut my good friend the Attorney General—who I like and admire—off at the knees. He had a rather long process to come to a solution, and I think the Premier woke up one Sunday morning and had become terribly impatient that this bureaucratic process had gone on and dilly-dallied for far too long. The Premier, rather than picking up the phone and phoning his Attorney General or phoning his press secretary about setting up an announcement, just called Keith Leslie on a Sunday morning and made the announcement. He didn't have a press conference. There was no opportunity for the minister or the Premier to be available to make this sort of announcement, and that surprised me. It surprised me greatly.

I thought the Premier, since he had taken charge of this file—and I've seen this happen to a number of ministers, where the Premier takes charge of the file for them. My friend from Leeds–Grenville has seen that as well, hasn't he?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Yes.

Mr. Baird: I would have thought the Premier would have wanted to lead off the bill, because it really should be his name on the front of this bill.

Interjection.

Mr. Baird: If the Attorney General wants to discuss the previous Premier, I'm certainly happy to do that on any occasion. But I will tell you, I was surprised.

I was also terribly surprised that neither the minister nor the Premier would have consulted the big Jewish community in Ottawa. Why wouldn't they have consulted them before this decision was arrived at, or the Christian community, in which a considerable amount of arbitration had gone on over the years? In some respects, they threw the baby out with the bath water, and that was a big surprise to me.

Maybe in the answer period, the Attorney General could answer that question of why he or the Premier was not available at a Sunday morning press conference to speak to this issue.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm not going to be able to start my comments to this bill until later this afternoon. I'm looking forward, of course, to Bob Runciman from the Conservative Party, their critic. He will be speaking for the one-hour lead-off on behalf of the Conservative caucus.

Look, New Democrats have made it very clear: We are very troubled by this legislation. There are problems that have been spoken about and written about over the recent past around arbitration of family law matters. New Democrats were and continue to be eager to find a resolution to those problems. Indeed, in the very latter part of spring of this year, New Democrats made it clear that we believed that section 2 of the Arbitration Act, 1991, should be utilized to exempt family law matters from consideration under the Arbitration Act. We were influenced in reaching that decision in no small part because that's the course that Quebec took. In their civil code, they exempt family law matters and similarly related matters.

There's going to be a whole pile of observations made, but I want to highlight a couple right now. This bill does not exclude the consideration of estate law matters by arbitrators of any sort or any ilk. It only excludes the arbitration of matters under part IV of the Family Law Act, and that is something that should be of great concern to all of us, because the concern around biases in certain religious philosophies and perspectives has a great impact on that.

As well, while this Arbitration Act attempts to address the problem, it fails miserably. It contemplates the utilization of the law of Ontario or of any other province in Canada, but what about a couple of French citizens who happen to be in the province of Ontario who would want the law of France applied in the course of an arbitration? This law effectively denies them that right.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I hope at some point I'm going to have an opportunity to speak at length to this piece of legislation, because it's a very important one. As a member of the women's caucus in the government, we felt that it was very important that we look at the issues raised by the issue of faith-based arbitration at all in family matters.

That's what this legislation does. It says that faith-based arbitration in family law matters is not going to—the agreements that would come out of such an arbitration process are not going to have any legal standing. In doing that, this legislation strikes the balance, because what we've said is that we need to put in place the protections that should be there anyway for all arbitrations on family matters: the regulation of arbitrators and the mandatory independent legal advice. Those are protections that should be in place. So I'm very happy that the legislation includes those and will make arbitration on family law matters a much more protected process especially, from my perspective, for women who enter into it.

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On the issue of faith-based arbitration, this government has looked at what happened in 1991, we've looked at the Arbitration Act, and we've said, "You know what? Something was missed here." We believe that faith-based arbitration doesn't have any place in family matters. If people need to or want to go to their place of worship to get advice, that's fine. That's informal advice, and everyone is free to do that. That religious freedom is intact. But in terms of having an agreement that has legal standing, this legislation makes it clear that those faith-based arbitrations will no longer have the weight of law.

I'm very happy we've come to this solution, and I applaud the minister for his legislation.

Mr. Runciman: I appreciate the opportunity to ask a question or two here as well as to make some observations.

The Attorney General in his opening comments talked about some of the processes involved in going down this road, but I'm not really sure, in terms of the public, who expressed concerns which I think drove the government to finally make a decision, whether he has in a fulsome way explained how we got into this situation initially. I think it would be helpful for all of us to have a better understanding of what drove the initiative in the first place. Was this a commitment made during an election process? Was there some promise made to a group in society that would suggest that this was a process that should be undertaken by the government of the day? I think it would be helpful for all of us to have some understanding of that and, as well, an understanding of what's happening with respect to this government. I think that's an important issue. It may not deal specifically with the legislation itself, Mr. Speaker, so I'll be looking to you for some understanding, but how this all came about and how this government goes about making decisions—I think we can clearly tie that into the process that took place here.

It should be of concern to all Ontarians. When they look at the government of the province of Ontario and look at the decision-making process, I think what occurred here is an eye-opener, to say the least: the fact that so many people were shut out of this process, with no opportunity for input or involvement whatsoever. I think that's something that I will be expanding upon in my remarks, which will be coming very shortly.

Certainly, I think if the Attorney General or the minister of women's issues could expand a little more fulsomely with respect to the origins of this initiative, that would be helpful.

The Acting Speaker: The Attorney General or the member from Willowdale has two minutes.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: What got us into this in the first place, I say to the Attorney General critic for the official opposition, is a bill introduced by Howard Hampton and supported by Charles Harnick, and supported by this party. As a result of the 1991 Arbitration Act, some people expressed some serious concern about religious tribunals taking place.

With respect to consultation, I'm surprised. I don't think the official opposition sought or obtained any appearance before the Marion Boyd review, but she held a review for six months. She heard from more than 50 groups. She considered written submissions from a wide variety of people. It was certainly open to everybody, and we encouraged everybody to participate in the review. So any suggestion that there wasn't consultation—there was enormous consultation that went into this. We had a review. We had Marion Boyd review this and hear from people, and then we sat down with people.

At the end of the day, the issue here is that the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, the Canadian Federation of University Women, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children, the Muslim Canadian Congress, the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, YWCA Canada, YWCA Toronto, yes, Margaret Atwood, yes, June Callwood, and yes, John Tory all say that we need to make these changes. I agree. The government agrees.

We feel that removing family law arbitrations altogether would be a disaster. That was the view of those who work in this business every day. I understand that that's what the third party is now counselling, that we in fact bring forth this disaster by removing family law arbitrations.

I look forward to the debate on that, and I look forward to the debate on the specifics, should the members have specific concerns about specific provisions, because obviously this is an important matter that affects women and children and all Ontarians. We want to make sure that we hear from members during this debate, and I certainly will be listening very closely.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Runciman: I want to indicate that I will be sharing my time with Mr. Baird, the member for Nepean—Carleton.

That was an amazing response we just heard from the Attorney General with respect to why we are where we are today and what really prompted the McGuinty Liberal government, nine, 10 or 11 months ago, to start down this road. He's suggesting, "John Tory made me do it." That just doesn't stand up to scrutiny.

It's regrettable that perhaps we'll never get to know—unless someone is going to be a little more forthcoming during this debate and perhaps during committee hearings—why this occurred and why the government put its toe in this water. Perhaps it's from the Attorney General's friends in the legal community, who make a few good bucks with respect to arbitration. Perhaps that's the reason why. Who knows? Certainly we're not getting an answer in any adequate way from the Attorney General with respect to this issue. I think it would be important and helpful to all of us to understand why we entered this arena. When you take a look at what's transpired over the past nine or 10 months that this has been lingering and festering—I think that's a fair word to use—it's been hurtful to the community, and I'm talking

about the broader community here, not one specific community.

We heard from the minister for women's issues earlier, talking about the Liberal government's belief in support for minorities and equality. Well, what I think happened here—and we saw this festering and festering, and more remarks being made by a variety of people in different faith communities and beyond—is that it deepened divisions within society in Ontario. I think that was the ultimate result of the fumbling and mishandling of this issue by the Attorney General and his colleagues. I think that almost incessant and constant fumbling—and a slap in the face to people who believe in faith-based arbitration—is why the Premier was ignoring all of the consultations, and the Attorney General gets on his feet today and has the gall to talk about it in a positive way.

He said there were 50 submissions, six months of hearings, and was criticizing me personally because I didn't appear before the Boyd commission. I wasn't the Attorney General critic at the time, or I may have had an inclination to make an appearance. He uses that in the debate today as some sort of suggestion of how they listen to people, how they pay attention to interventions and concerns. Well, it's the exact opposite. That is an argument for the other side of the coin: that they don't listen to people or pay attention to submissions and interventions.

Ms. Boyd wasted six months of her time and that of the groups who came before her. I'm not sure how many of them were supportive of extension with respect to faith-based arbitration or expressed concerns about it, but clearly at the end of the day, Ms. Boyd reached a conclusion which the government, for a variety of reasons, decided was not something that was going to be palatable to a majority, perhaps not of Ontarians but a majority of individuals, groups and organizations that are sympathetic to the Liberal cause or historically and traditionally have been sympathetic to the Liberal cause. If that's not the case, we certainly haven't heard a persuasive argument otherwise.

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I have to say that the groups and individuals that appeared before the Boyd commission—I'm going to call it a commission, the Marion Boyd commission—feel a sense of significant betrayal by the Liberal government; significant betrayal. I think they have every right to feel that way. I'm not just talking about the Jewish community, and I don't know if Mr. Patten has any members of the Jewish community in his riding, but perhaps they might want to give him a call and talk about his interventions here and being critical of my raising their concerns here today.

I think they have every right to feel betrayed by the Liberal government with respect to what occurred in this situation. They went and appeared before Boyd; they put their case forward with respect to how they feel faith-based arbitration has worked for the Jewish community in the province of Ontario. Ms. Boyd comes out and makes her recommendations in terms of extending it, and

then, all of a sudden, the Premier, on a Sunday afternoon, in one conversation with one journalist out of Queen's Park, says, "No, we're rejecting that."

What happened to those 50 submissions that the Attorney General boasts about here today? What happened to the six months of hearings that the Attorney General boasts about today? They were thrown out the window in one phone call made by the Premier of the province of Ontario on a Sunday afternoon. That not only reflects badly on the Premier, on the government, on the Attorney General, on the minister responsible for women's issues; I think it reflects badly in terms of the way this government operates on so many issues. I guess you could describe it perhaps as a signature piece of the way this government conducts itself in terms of significant issues.

I've had an opportunity to talk to some members of the Jewish community. Certainly, they're upset. They are demanding public hearings—and I know that my friends in the third party, the NDP, are very supportive of public hearings. They feel it's an absolute necessity with respect to this legislation, given the government's high-handed, heavy-handed treatment of their community, and certainly, they want to have an opportunity to put their concerns on the record, not only with respect to the lack of consultation in the way they were led down the path with respect to potential changes here, but also because of the fact that they feel this was a terrible, terrible slap in the face; not just blindsiding, but a slap in the face to their faith. That's the reality. That's how they're feeling. This sort of the smearing—I don't think they have used that word but they've used other very descriptive language to suggest that this is really a reflection on their faith and the conduct of their faith and the individuals who've participated in these faith-based arbitration processes over the past number of years.

I understand that it has been primarily the Jewish religion that has utilized this. I'm not standing here as an advocate for any particular group or organization of the province, but it was raised with me by an individual with respect to how this evolved over the past number of the years since the original legislation was adopted by the Legislature. This was during the midst of this debate and the growing public furor, and he indicated to me that when the legislation evolved into faith-based arbitration, there weren't concerns in terms of the broader public, because there was consensus within the different faith communities that were utilizing this; with the Christian community, which has, I guess, moderate usage, and within the Jewish community, which has certainly utilized it to a much greater degree—but there was consensus; there were no divisions within those communities.

When we looked at the Muslim community, that was a different situation. We certainly had concerns. I had a delegation representing Muslim women come to see me, who were very, very concerned about what the impact would be on Muslim families and especially Muslim

women and their children. Clearly, we had that division; we didn't have consensus within that religion itself.

That, again, may have been—in this lawyer's and former Attorney General's view—reason enough not to go down that road. That's why I asked the Attorney General earlier, "What got you on to this path other than, perhaps, your friends in the legal fraternity who are looking for bigger bucks?" I think we have a right to know what drove you in this direction.

It would have been nice if he had gotten up and said, "We had delegations appear before us from the Muslim community who were, I think, making real demands on us to move in this direction." If that's the case, he certainly didn't make that clear; I think it was from other communities and other individuals. As I said, the Attorney General is clearly not going to be more forthcoming with respect to what really drove this initiative.

Of all the people this reflects badly on, it is the Attorney General. We know his attraction to the lime-light, the cameras and the microphones. It has certainly been a feature of his tenancy in the Attorney General's office. Both the House leader for the NDP and myself—we're both justice critics as well—have attended many of these very vacuous press conferences that the Attorney General holds at every possible opportunity to make non-announcements but to have his face on camera, his voice on air and his words in print.

Here we have a situation which I think he initiated. I believe that the Attorney General initiated this for reasons known best to him. Where do we go from here? We have this thing going back and forth within the Liberal caucus. It was out in the public domain. We had concerns in the so-called women's caucus within the Liberal caucus. We have the stalwarts like June Callwood and others who tend to be supportive of the party that currently governs the province of Ontario, historically, and all of that concern and lobbying activity building to a pressure point where not only did the Premier act on a Sunday afternoon—I think precipitously and in an unfortunate way—but we also created, I think, greater divisions within society in Ontario.

Take a look at the Muslim community. As I indicated earlier, there's clearly no consensus within the Muslim community with respect to whether this was the appropriate way to go in terms of extending faith-based arbitration into the Muslim community. But putting that aside, the portion, if you will, of the Muslim community that supported this initiative, that believed in this initiative, were as blindsided as everyone else who made submissions to Ms. Boyd. They were left twisting in the wind for eight months while the government dithered on this issue, and divisions within society were allowed to fester and to grow in the last few weeks into the public domain, where it became a very heated issue in terms of the press.

I suspect that all of us, as members of the Legislature, were receiving phone calls and e-mails on this issue. That's a situation that should never have developed, but it's a situation that the government has to take complete

responsibility for, and, I believe, especially the Attorney General. This is laid at his doorstep.

I feel that this is a matter that of course we're never going to get to the bottom of, unless someone leaks it to the press at some point in time. I suspect that he initiated this, was the catalyst for this, for reasons known best to him. He dragged the government into this issue, he dragged all of these faith-based groups into this issue, and he dragged in others who took time to be involved in submissions. We then had a situation where people who had made an effort to participate were, I felt, blindsided by the government. Perhaps we'll see this in the next shuffle, but I think that was a situation where the Attorney General should have stepped aside, should have stepped down, and someone else should have filled that seat. Perhaps we'll see it in the next shuffle. I suspect that there are a number of issues where the Premier is less than happy with the actions and the words of the Attorney General in his efforts to be in the media at every opportunity.

1630

I do want to talk about a couple of things. We've indicated that we are supportive of the principle, with respect to family law arbitration, that there is only one law in Ontario, and that's Canadian law. We indicated at the outset that that's where we come from as well. I know my friend the member from Welland-Thorold is very concerned about some of these implications with respect to the legislation itself, and those concerns may be growing, amongst others. We'll certainly learn, as time moves ahead and as we get into public hearings, that there may be other implications with respect to this legislation. This is not having the same impact that the initiative undertaken by the government of Quebec had with respect to clearing the air in simply saying that family law is not going to be a part of this arbitration process. This has, in some respects, muddied the waters, and I think we're going to need increasing clarification with respect to all of the implications. Hopefully, we'll be able to get clarification as we get this more out in the public domain and get the legislation forwarded to a number of groups and individuals who can provide input to us informally and then through a formal process through the Legislature during committee hearings.

I do want to put a couple of points on the record with respect to concerns that the Jewish community has. We'll be dealing with these in a more substantive way, but I just want to have them on the record at this point in time. I'm quoting from notes that I took during my conversations: "Regardless of the relative merits of the legislation, there's been an egregious lack of process in the form of a failure to consult" that will be directly affected by a change in the law.

I've spent some time talking to that issue. I don't think there's anyone who disagrees with that, but we haven't heard anyone get up on the government side—and hopefully, during the course of this debate, they will get up and explain—and give us an explanation as to why this happened in the way it happened. It's still mind-boggling

that the Attorney General can get up here and boast about six months of hearings and 50 submissions, which they in effect ignored, in one phone call ignored. I'm asking any member on the government side to get up at some point during the process of this debate and explain to the good people who in good faith made an appearance before the Boyd commission and made their submissions, and explain to us why that was just tossed aside in one phone call to Mr. Leslie. I think that's important to hear, and certainly we'll be pressing that issue as we go forward. Certainly, during the committee, we will be pressing government members. Hopefully, one of the ministers, if not both, will appear before the committee to explain—in a more fulsome way, in a direct-questioning way, rather than the forum we have here—what happened in this situation.

Again, the Canadian Jewish Congress from the Ontario region supports the Progressive Conservative Party's call and the NDP's call for public hearings. They believe it's absolutely essential that, at long last, they will have input. It's a little late in the day, but perhaps there will be opportunities for clarification, modification and perhaps even a withdrawal of the legislation if there are certain serious impacts that perhaps many of us are not aware of at this point in time, as more and more people are analyzing the legislation.

As pointed out in the note, one of the concerns here is the fact that the legislation has a number of vague concepts, where we have to have some specification in order to allow all of us, let alone the groups affected, to have a fuller and hopefully a complete understanding of the implications. That's certainly one of the areas of concern.

There's no question that equality and the protection of women's rights are paramount considerations, and I'm going to speak to that a little later on. But at the same time, it's crucial that we don't focus on issues that effectively have the state controlling matters of conscience while doing nothing to advance protection against the abuses we all agree must be prevented. We have seen a number of issues in terms of the family courts. We saw one recently in Windsor, where a physician went into the workplace and murdered a nurse who had been, apparently, according to press reports, attempting to get a Family Court date to have a restraining order, a peace bond, placed upon the individual who ultimately murdered her in the workplace. That's the sort of real dilemma facing so many, I think, in this province, especially women and their children.

The backlog in family courts, where someone has to wait eight months to have a hearing, to have a peace bond issued, is the sort of issue that is not being dealt with in an effective way, and is a concern to many when we talk about women's rights and the protection of women's rights as paramount considerations.

Again, in terms of the Canadian Jewish Congress, they want to put on the record as well—we'll be elaborating on this a little more later on during the debate—that they are particularly concerned that Ontarians not be treated

unequally with respect to arbitration decisions that have been voluntarily entered into and are fully consistent with Ontario law, just because they also draw on concepts informed by faith, conscience or religion.

I mentioned earlier the vague nature of a number of provisions in the legislation. The regulations will be decisive. We don't have a review of regulations. There's no such process in this province. Although some jurisdictions do provide committees of the Legislature the opportunity to review and comment on regulations, that's not a matter of course in this Legislature, in this government, so I think that's an area we have to pursue during committee hearings. I think that in anyone's view, given the vagueness of the wording of this legislation, the regulations are going to be decisive in terms of how this is implemented.

I haven't heard any opposition to public hearings, although the government would like to see this legislation passed before the Christmas break. The opposition is going to be demanding public hearings, and fulsome public hearings. We'll be contacting as many people as we can to ensure they're given an opportunity to sit down and give their views.

1640

Over the short period of time that I've been involved in this issue, we did try and get a better handle with respect to the Christian community, but it's my understanding, to the best of our knowledge, up to this point in time, that arbitration has not been a commonly used process within the Christian community. Usually in that community, any faith-based involvement consists of advice, which is not, as we understand it, inconsistent with the bill. In any event, at this point in time, that's what we're hearing from members of the Christian community whom we've been able to contact to date.

We have another series of questions that I'll put on the record tonight which we'll be looking for answers to as we proceed into committee, because I'm not confident that we're going to hear them during the debate. Certainly, we're not hearing them from the Attorney General. The rules and regulations of the process are not clearly laid out. So again, as I mentioned earlier, there are a significant number of unanswered questions.

Can religious aspects be incorporated into the arbitration process while the decision remains based on federal and provincial law? That was a question that was raised during conversation earlier this week. If a rabbi, as an example, is also a lawyer, recognized as an accredited arbitrator, can he even open the process with a prayer? Those are basic questions which need to be answered. The Jewish community, the Hebrew community, doesn't have those answers to date. They don't know, because, as I said earlier, no one from the government, including the Attorney General, bothered to consult with them.

I think if they had been responsible with respect to how they approached this decision, they would have clearly laid out what they wanted to accomplish and allowed the public to respond, rather than simply making a Sunday afternoon announcement and then making an

effort to fast-track the legislation. That's why we believe we have to take the time to get this right, and, again, our emphasis is on public hearings.

The fact is that members of the Jewish community have benefited, in their view—and we haven't heard anything to the contrary—from arbitration on family law issues. Members of the Jewish community whom I've spoken with—I know the name of the former Attorney General, Mr. Harnick, was raised here earlier, and certainly all of the feedback he's received from that community has been positive with respect to how this process has worked for them. As my colleague from Nepean–Carleton mentioned earlier, this perhaps can be described as throwing the baby out with the bathwater with respect to how this was arrived at.

You have to wonder with respect to these 50 submissions, and I go back to process here. We know what was happening within the Liberal caucus. They were getting a lot of calls, e-mails and contacts with respect to this initiative. I suspect there was some sort of an analysis, not just of what they were hearing from their supporters but they took a look at the submissions and the people who made those submissions and then did some sort of political calculation. I think that's the bottom line here. This was a political calculation, and not a calculation that should have been based on Ms. Boyd's submissions.

It would have been nice to have been a fly on the wall during the discussion around the retention of Ms. Boyd to conduct this submission. It would have been nice to have access to the minutes of that meeting, what the intent was, what they hoped to conclude from Ms. Boyd; whether they were assuming, because of her track record with respect to women's issues, that they would have a completely different conclusion emanating from her hearings. Who knows?

I think Ms. Boyd did her best and conducted extensive hearings—she's that kind of individual—and came up with what she felt was an appropriate response to the request and the assignment given her by the government. That may have thrown a curve into the government's plans. They felt, "Well, we're going to have an NDP women's rights advocate who will tell us this isn't the way to go," then they were thrown a curve, didn't know how to deal it, and dithered and dithered and dithered.

Finally, the heat got so bad that they had to do something; they had to reach some conclusion. The Premier, through his political advisers, said, "Let's get this out the door on a Sunday afternoon. We've got an interview with Keith Leslie. Let's give him the scoop." It's as simple as that, as callous as that and cold as that, and a terrible affront to all the groups who believe that this was a legitimate process that they were engaged in. Maybe that's the answer: This was never a legitimate process.

Of course, because we don't know what really drove this from the outset, it's difficult to arrive at an answer, whether there was some commitment made during an election campaign—and then we go down this road and hire Ms. Boyd: "She'll give us an answer that the NDP

won't be able to object to because it's a former Attorney General from the NDP government time, and we can fly through this." Then they found themselves in a quandary and dealt with it in an extremely unfortunate manner.

I just want to put a number of other things on the record, because we've had the bulk of the feedback from the Canadian Jewish Congress. They know our position with respect to supporting the principle with respect to one law—Canadian law—having application here. But at the same time, what they're talking about is the process again. The fact that their community has benefited, in their view—and I haven't heard anyone from arbitrators on family law issues disagree. One of the other points that was made by them is that native justice healing circles are not impacted, but that's a similar example of how alternatives to court can be very valuable.

We have to agree that the purpose of any justice system is to mete out justice and have all concerned agree that justice has been done. With respect to the healing circles, when native elders punish their own there's greater respect for the outcome because the process assumes a higher level of understanding and sensitivity. The justice meted out in that process, one can argue, carries more weight because it's administered by people that the victim—and, in most circumstances, the perpetrator—respect.

The argument for the folks who have used faith-based tribunals is that similar principles have applied in those processes. They've also had the advantage in the sense that participants who are both being religious and being in a religious setting are highly motivated to tell the truth and arrive at a compromise in the best interests of all parties.

The concerns we heard expressed by the public were not that faith-based arbitrations were unjust. Public expressions for the most part were of fear and worry based on a specific concern that Ontario might allow certain extremist applications of some versions of shariah law. To some degree, those were very well-founded in terms of talking to women of Muslim faith who shared those concerns and felt that enough assurances weren't being provided to give them comfort. Certainly, I think the role they played in this was a significant one in terms of changing views, perhaps. Again, we have to make assumptions here, because we do not know the real motivation behind this initiative from the outset, if it was purely political with a goal in mind from the beginning, which I suspect might have been the case, but we do not know that.

1650

But I want to put their views—I think they have to be heard, because the government hasn't given them an opportunity to be heard, and their arguments with respect to how the system worked for them in the past have to be put on the record. Respect for the faithful, if you wish to describe them that way, for their religion, to facilitate the resolution of disputes that might otherwise prove to be intractable, was the basis for many parties to seek arbitration, and the McGuinty Liberals' heavy-handed ap-

proach to decision-making without consultation has not only offended them; I think it's hurt them. I think many in that community were supporters of that party in the last election, and I think "betrayal" is not too strong a word with respect to the very significant sentiment that's throughout that community today with respect to how this matter has been handled by the McGuinty Liberal government.

I don't think anyone would disagree with the right to take steps to safeguard the arbitration process to ensure that civil disputes first and foremost have to be consistent with Canadian law and the charter, through independent counsel, legal counsel, and through voluntary attendance. However, in our view—one, I think, shared by so many—it has been and is entirely irresponsible to enact this legislation without consultation. We have to ensure the details are appropriate and will address the needs of communities right across this province.

Again, I think this is a further indictment of the McGuinty Liberal government with respect to the management processes within the current provincial government. We've suggested on so many occasions that it seems to be government by the seat of the pants, or government on the back of a napkin. We've seen so many of these situations occur. You have to wonder. I know that the cabinet doesn't meet—as a former member of the executive council for over a little over eight years, nine years if you count my time with Premier Miller—

Mr. Baird: Previous, previous, previous, previous.

Mr. Runciman: Previous, previous; yes. We met on a very regular basis. This cabinet does not meet on as regular a basis. Again, you wonder about the processes that are used by this government to make decisions. The lack of respect, especially on an issue as sensitive as this one—

Mr. Baird: —in respect to the Attorney General.

Mr. Runciman: Well, that as well. And I think I can see, in the next shuffle, that we may see a change of face in that particular chair.

Mr. Kormos: Who could become Attorney General?

Mr. Runciman: I'm sure there will be all sorts of efforts in terms of competing for that seat.

Mr. Kormos: Who would be good?

Mr. Runciman: Well, we'll leave that discussion to my colleague.

I think there's no question that this is a black mark on the government. It's another in terms of this series of decisions that are clearly indicating on a growing basis what we frequently describe as incompetence: their inability to think things through before they get themselves into situations that not only create difficulty for the people of Ontario but offend a great many in our province. This is one of those. It's a very, very sensitive issue. Regardless of your view of the initiative, this deepened divisions within society at a time when they are certainly least needed, given what's happening on a worldwide basis. It was truly unfortunate, and a day the government will rue, I'm sure.

My colleague will now join the debate.

Mr. Baird: What a great speech by the member for Leeds–Grenville.

This is one of the most tricky issues that I think I've seen in my 10 years in this place. It's not an easy one. It's not an easy one with respect to the substance of it as a public policy issue, and the politics of this are prickly, I say to the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: Do you want to spell that for Hansard?

Mr. Baird: I will not.

Shariah law—family law arbitration—can still be used in Ontario whether this bill is adopted or not. If two people want to come together on a voluntary basis and use an arbitration mechanism of their choice, whether that be shariah law or any law, they are of course free to do so. The issue is whether the state will enforce the results of that arbitration.

I heard from a huge number of constituents in eastern Ontario, in Nepean–Carleton and Ottawa West–Nepean, about this issue: a huge respect for diversity, to recognize that people's religious values inform a lot of their thinking.

We are not like the United States, where it was a big deal to have faith-based institutions get involved in public programs and public services. In Canada, the political culture is very different from that in the United States. While in the United States it was a big deal when the now President first announced that policy, in Canada a lot of social services are offered by religious-based groups. I think of Christian Horizons, which does good work with respect to those with developmental disabilities. I think of the Salvation Army, which operates a lot of homeless shelters and even does a number of other types of social services. We have a Jewish children's aid society, which gets funding and has the authority of the state when it comes to child protection here in Toronto. I have visited with those folks; they do a good job. We have our Catholic separate school funding, support from the state and various legal authorities.

So we have a tradition of working with religions in this province. There was a significant concern with respect to shariah law. Many Muslims and Muslim women's organizations had significant concerns with it. Many Muslims, again, had a great deal of support, and if they were here they would probably argue that it was a Canadianized version of shariah law that they were hoping to use.

But I think the public hearings in this are going to be very important. Does the bill do what the government purports it does? Is this really one law for all, as the communications lines out of the Premier's office tried to suggest? People have an expectation that this is removing state-sanctioned, state-sponsored and state-enforced shariah law in Ontario.

I'm going to be listening with great interest to the member for Niagara Centre, who's an accomplished lawyer; a legal theorist, a trained, seasoned legislator; who brings a lot of background knowledge. He was here in this place around the cabinet table back in 1991, I think—

Interjection.

Mr. Baird: Not around the cabinet table—when they did arbitration changes. So he brings a huge amount of expertise to this.

Mr. Kormos: But I had that broader backbench perspective.

Mr. Baird: The “broader backbench perspective.” Of course, the member for Niagara Centre isn’t on the backbench any longer; he’s on the front bench—

Mr. Kormos: Of the third party.

Mr. Baird: —of the third party. I’ve been in the third party, so I know what it’s like, I say to the member for Niagara Centre.

There are going to be real, substantial questions as to why we’re throwing the baby out with the bathwater. I haven’t heard a single concern with respect to the Jewish family arbitration processes; not a single one. I’ve been here for 11 years. I understand from some that it has worked, and worked well. I have heard no complaints in my office. I try to keep my ear to the ground and listen.

1700

There was a very strong article written in one of the Toronto dailies which reflected on how this decision was made with no consultation, and how 10, 20, 30 years ago the Jewish community, like a number of other faith-based communities, would have had a better relationship with the government. I say to the Attorney General, on behalf of the Jewish community in my constituency—just to note—that it is a huge concern for the community that they were not involved, consulted, discussed or even heard out.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: They appeared before the review.

Mr. Baird: They were not happy. I say to the Attorney General, the Jewish community is not happy with you. He may think that appearing before a review with a former NDP cabinet minister was enough, but it wasn’t, and there was a significant amount of concern.

Mr. Runciman: They rejected the recommendations.

Mr. Baird: They rejected the recommendations, and that’s something that causes some greater concerns.

I understand some Christian arbitration takes place. Again, I haven’t heard a single complaint on that in my 10 or 11 years here, but the government is throwing it out with the bathwater.

Someone said, “You couldn’t do it for one religion and not for the others. It wouldn’t be fair.” We know that this Dalton McGuinty government doesn’t care about that. They provide funding for one religion—the separate school system—but refuse to provide the equity-in-education tax credit, whether it’s for parents who want to send their children to a Muslim school or a Jewish day school or a Christian school like we have in my part of the province. So we know that this government has already made exceptions based on religion in the past, yet they’re refusing to do it in the future. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Community and Social Services, as I mentioned, fund a Jewish children’s aid society, fund various Christian-based social service agencies. We have the Tamir Foundation in Ottawa, an organization run by the Jewish community to help people

with developmental disabilities. That doesn’t bear the scrutiny of what the reality is, and I think that’s a terrific concern. As the member for Leeds–Grenville said, I know the official opposition will be wanting committee time so that those folks who have been left out will have their opportunity to have a voice.

I say to the members opposite that the way this was announced—on a Sunday morning or Sunday afternoon, no ministers available, no public scrutiny—caused a huge amount of concern. Sometimes when you make a controversial decision—and I’m not even objecting to the fundamental decision they made with respect to shariah law—you’ve got to look people in the eye and explain why. This government didn’t subject itself to any accountability.

I say to the House leader for the third party, I hope the third party will be onside with the opposition House leader in asking for public hearings. I would like to see public hearings on this in Ottawa. Shariah law is very controversial, both for and against. I would like to suggest they have the hearings in Ottawa South, which has a particularly large Muslim community. We’ll see whether the Premier wants that type of consultation in his own constituency. We haven’t had any public hearings go to Ottawa South, and that would be a good place to start.

This also demonstrates quite clearly that this government is run by the Premier’s office. This has been a trend which has gone on over the years. When I was in government, the opposition members, who now sit in the government benches, used to decry the growing power and centralization—which certainly did take place, but this is like centralization on steroids, I say to the member for Leeds–Grenville. No longer is power wielded in the cabinet, as it might have been years ago. They’re even shutting out the Attorney General.

I expect that the Premier saw the well-orchestrated public relations campaign. I saw Maureen McTeer, who is one of the authors of that letter, speaking out to people in Ontario in a message to this Premier. I congratulate her for her work on that. I expect they saw that letter; they saw the concerns and the growing public debate. They saw the fact that the process adopted by the minister had not worked and was not yielding an expeditious result, so they just did it on the fly. Whether it was on the back of a napkin or on the seat of their pants, I don’t know. I wasn’t there; I couldn’t tell you—but I expect that was the result. We’ve certainly seen that.

People will want to know that this bill does what the authors suggest it will do. I’ll want to see the many prominent women in Ontario who wrote that public letter come before the committee and tell us whether they think the bill meets the concerns which they expressed. I’m not entirely sure that it does. That’s something that’s important.

Interjection.

Mr. Baird: I would say to the member for Leeds–Grenville, yes.

This is a significant issue. We’ll want to hear from the Muslim community. I know that in Ottawa there will be a

number of members of the Muslim community who will want to appear. That's something that's important.

We'll want hearings at Queen's Park. We'll want to hear from some legal theorists, for them to decide whether this bill does what the member said it would do.

We'll want to see hearings. I don't know whether this government is expecting to get this bill passed between now and Christmas. As usual, with the break, I expect the government will want the House extended. It hasn't managed its legislative agenda properly. Jim Bradley, while a nice guy, is no Dwight Duncan, and we've not had as fruitful efforts passed.

I say to the member for Leeds–Grenville, is there—

Interjection.

Mr. Baird: That's what I thought. So we'll wonder whether they have the courage of their convictions to get out and listen to and hear the concerns people have, and not try to ram this bill through without proper public input.

I also want to speak to the government's process. I have read Ms. Boyd's report. The government asked Ms. Boyd to look into the issue. She's a well-respected individual. She certainly has one of the most unique backgrounds to approach this file. Obviously, one of the central concerns about this issue is an imbalance of power, particularly among those who might be vulnerable with respect to the arbitration of a family law dispute with respect to shariah. Ms. Boyd, of course, has a tremendous background, with the work she has done with vulnerable women in London with the London Battered Women's Advocacy Centre—which I have visited, by the way, with Ms. Boyd—but also as a former Attorney General.

The 40- or 50-odd recommendations in her report really were the delight of any person who liked a lot of red tape, rules and regulations. I expect that if you took all the religious values out of shariah law, it was a stretch to think that you could actually implement the Boyd report, whether the Muslim community would find it acceptable. Could the safeguards that she envisaged and advocated in her report to the government even be accomplished? I'm not even sure this bill will accomplish them.

They basically took her report—a report written by somebody, like I said, who's a competent individual—and just threw it out the window. The Premier said, "I've had enough. This has gone on too long." I don't like to see the Premier cut off his ministers at the knees.

Mr. Kormos: It's not a pretty sight.

Mr. Baird: "It's not a pretty sight," the member for Niagara Centre says. There are plenty of examples of that over the last 25 years in this place.

Mr. Kormos: Thirty.

Mr. Baird: Thirty years, the member for Niagara Centre says.

I would say to all those people watching on television, don't adjust your TV set. The member for Niagara Centre will be coming up to speak in short order. He has done a terrific amount of research, and he's shared it with me. I don't want to steal his thunder, because he's one of the

few people who not only has done his homework but has actually read the bill, and he has a number of—

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: My point of order pertains to standing order 23(b)(i). The debating merits of the member for Niagara Centre notwithstanding, I'm wondering if the member for Nepean–Carleton is actually going to speak to the bill and tell us whether he supports it before he begins to campaign.

1710

The Acting Speaker: I have listened intently to the member from Nepean–Carleton. I don't think he has deviated one minute from the bill. I don't think he has talked about anything else except the bill. I don't know the point of order.

The member from Nepean–Carleton.

Mr. Baird: I want to say very directly to the member: I am campaigning for something. I'm leading a campaign to get the federal government to rent the land to the Queensway Carleton Hospital for a dollar a year instead of trying to raise the rent, which could be in the hundreds of thousands and even millions of dollars. So I am leading, I am campaigning, I say to the member opposite.

We could arbitrate our differences here, but here's an example where the McGuinty government has stood up for our hospital. George Smitherman, the Minister of Health, has had the courage to stand up and support the Queensway Carleton Hospital against the federal government, and I want to acknowledge that today. This could be a dispute resolution, but there's no dispute here. The Minister of Health has done a heck of a job in his standing up for the Queensway Carleton Hospital, and I want to publicly acknowledge that.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): Talk about the Montfort now.

Mr. Baird: The member opposite talks about the Montfort. Well, I was the minister who went to the Montfort and announced that the government wouldn't close the hospital.

Mr. Delaney: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker: We have another point of order from the member from Mississauga West, which this time may be in order.

Mr. Delaney: The merits of the hospital notwithstanding, the matter under discussion is Bill 27.

The Acting Speaker: I think the member's point is well taken. I would ask the member from Nepean–Carleton to address the issue at hand.

Mr. Baird: Maybe we could use one of the arbitration mechanisms that the Attorney General talks about in this bill to arbitrate the fight between the Queensway Carleton Hospital and the federal government. I wonder. Maybe we could tack on an amendment to this arbitration bill, which would help all three political parties, because, I should mention, Shelley Martel, the NDP health critic and member for Nickel Belt, is also supporting the hospital, as is Ed Broadbent, the well-respected member. If we had some arbitration sections—

Mr. Kormos: Jack Layton.

Mr. Baird: Jack Layton voted for the hospital. Jack Layton stood up. That would be an excellent way to deal with this, but I don't think they have an arbitration process to take federal Liberals who want to steal money from Ontario hospitals. I don't think there's any federal arbitration in the system. But I understand there are other arbitrated matters, that Jack and Gilles have talked about to Stephen and there will be some potential news coming out of Ottawa over the next amount of time.

I hope that before that happens this government will agree to do the right thing and agree to look the people who will be affected by this bill in the eye and explain why they're throwing out, for all intents and purposes, I understand, a Jewish arbitration process which has worked well, and other Christian ones which I haven't heard a single concern about, I say to the member for Leeds–Grenville. We'll want those people to have a voice, and we'll want government members there—maybe the very competent parliamentary assistant—to be able to look at these folks in the eye and explain why.

I know the government House leader's office—Bill Wrye is with us here. Bill will want to schedule a week or two of hearings in the intersession to be able to listen to people. We should have some legal experts come and explain whether they think this bill meets its title, whether it really is going to lead to one bill for all, or whether it's going to try to legislate the 45 or 47 recommendations in the Boyd report, which I think would be an administrative nightmare for all concerned and would not do the accomplished goal that has been set out. I do support the goal, the intent, of the government in this regard with respect to the one area of concern, but we'll see whether they will allow public hearings so that people will have a meaningful opportunity to contribute to this process.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Kormos: It was a pleasure to listen to the official opposition House leader, Mr. Runciman, and then to his sidekick—it was like Batman and Robin, really—John Baird, who of course, in the riding of Ottawa–West Nepean, people expect over the course of the next 45 to 50 days to elect as their federal member of Parliament. I'm looking forward to seeing John Baird in Parliament in Ottawa. I'm looking forward to seeing the face of Stephen Harper when Baird is at his finest, sitting with his Conservative caucus colleagues.

But I want to make this point with respect to the Conservative comments around this legislation: I bemoan those who would somehow suggest that this debate should not be held; I bemoan that perspective. We have concerns about the bill that are far different, quite frankly, from many, but not all, of the Conservatives' concerns about the bill. But the failure, let's say, to speak candidly about what this bill is really about is a disservice to the people of this province. I hope that during the course of the debate there is clear, straightforward talk rather than a mincing of words and an avoidance of some obvious issues. Similarly, New Democrats are very clear: This bill calls for public hearings. There is a debate

that has to be conducted, both in this Legislature and in the committee room and out in the community. To avoid that debate—and I fear the government's intention is to attempt to avoid it—is a serious failure.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: In listening to the speeches from the official opposition, you wouldn't know whether and why they were supporting this bill, but just so everybody at home knows this—of course, the official opposition has an important job to do to hold the government's feet to the fire and ask many of the questions they're asking—they support this bill at the end of the day, and I'm glad they support this bill.

The issue of public hearings: I'm confident that House leaders will work this out. I'm confident that we will see an understanding around this debate. The official opposition said the debate was divisive, but they still want to have public hearings. I'll be interested to hear whether they are concerned that public hearings might be divisive too.

The official opposition said that we didn't consult enough, but that we took too long. The official opposition said that we should have consulted with religious communities. I know they wouldn't want to suggest that didn't happen, when of course it did. Joel Richler and Rabbi Roth, on behalf of the Canadian Jewish Congress, made very helpful and informative submissions to the Boyd review, and B'nai Brith appeared before the review and also provided written submissions. The suggestion that there wasn't appropriate consultation, I think, is simply inaccurate. There was significant consultation, at a scale I never saw when the official opposition was in government, but in any event, it happened here.

I look forward to hearing why the official opposition supports this bill, given their comments today. I hope Mr. Tory doesn't read the Hansard of the speeches today, and I'm sure the Premier will take the official opposition House leader's recommendation on a shuffle under advisement.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I am pleased to follow the Attorney General in this series of questions and comments relating to the speeches presented this afternoon by the member for Leeds–Grenville and the member for Nepean–Carleton. I was pleased to hear the Attorney General indicate that apparently he is not opposed to this bill going to a standing committee for further discussion and deliberations. I think he said something to the effect of, “The House leaders will work it out.” I gather from that he is indicating he would not stand in the way of public hearings. I would certainly echo and support the call of the member for Leeds–Grenville and the member for Nepean–Carleton, and the member for Niagara Centre as well, that there should be extensive public hearings on this bill. There are a number of public policy questions that have to be answered. The member from Leeds–Grenville questioned what the government's real motivation is behind this legislation—that's something that needs to be explored—how the decision was made and how it was announced, something that needs to be given further consideration and discus-

sion, because I don't think the government would stand today and defend exactly how it played itself out in that respect.

1720

The member for Leeds–Grenville also made a comment that the Attorney General, in his leadoff speech, had chastised him or criticized him or in some way suggested that the member for Leeds–Grenville should have made a presentation to Marion Boyd while she was undertaking her study of faith-based arbitration. I find that rather remarkable. It's not the role of an MPP to talk to Marion Boyd about this issue; it's our job as legislators to discuss, debate and challenge the government on a bill or proposal that comes before the Legislature. The member from Leeds–Grenville is doing exactly what he should do as a member of the Legislature in this respect. It's not his role or responsibility to go and talk to a government appointee who is given the task or charged with the responsibility of making a recommendation to the government. Clearly, the Attorney General has that a bit mixed up, I'm afraid to say.

This may very well be the last presentation in the Ontario Legislature by the member from Nepean–Carleton before he goes off to Ottawa to represent his constituents in the House of Commons, and I want to wish him all the very best in that respect. I look forward to being out on the campaign trail with him some time in the new year.

Mr. Delaney: Last summer, several dozen people contacted my constituency office by letter, telephone and e-mail regarding a proposal for faith-based arbitration that would be enforceable under Ontario civil code. A good many of those who contacted me had well-reasoned, thoughtful points, and all of those who contacted me—every one of them—were against having faith-based family mediation enforceable in Ontario's courts.

What I discussed with the people with whom I spoke last summer was that a western democracy is like a four-legged table: Each of the legs is independent, and all of them are needed for the table to stand securely. In a democratic society, those four independent legs are the government, the media, the judiciary and the church.

In democratic societies, the trend has always been toward greater separation between church and state, but in 1991, in Ontario, a review of the Arbitration Act brought church and state closer together rather than further apart. It did so, I believe, in error. This bill fixes that error and affirms the essential separation between church and state in our society.

People in Mississauga celebrate their rich, multi-cultural neighbourhoods. We're a living example of how a society's best and brightest can live and prosper side by side, equal in every respect and under the same set of laws. It's for this reason that Bill 27 is needed. It fixes a potential for problems that was likely not foreseeable when the Arbitration Act was revised some 14 years ago.

Being equal under one set of laws is why so many newcomers to Canada have chosen to call Ontario their home, and remaining equal under one set of laws—

Ontario and Canadian laws—is why people choose to stay and build their lives and families in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Leeds–Grenville or the member from Nepean–Carleton has two minutes.

Mr. Runciman: I want to join with my colleagues in extending best wishes to the member from Nepean–Carleton. It's really Parliament's gain and the Legislature's loss, which was even endorsed by the leader of the Liberal Party today. We're all going to miss his presence in this assembly and we wish him well in the Parliament of Canada.

Responding to some of the comments that were made, the Attorney General was suggesting that we have indicated that we support the legislation. I want to say that we have indicated from the outset that we support the general intent of those initiatives but we have not said that we support the legislation. We will support the bill in principle on the basis that it is going to have extensive public hearings and the people who were shut out of the process will have an opportunity to be heard.

The Attorney General raised the issue of whether this would be divisive. That's ironic, to say the least, coming from the Attorney General, who participated in this process, where they went through the process of allowing the public to have input through a variety of submissions, had a decision, a recommendation from the commissioner they retained to give them such a recommendation, then left all of those people twisting in the wind, to the point where we saw this onslaught, as all of us did as members of the Legislature, from the public, with concerns that were in some respects not based in reality. Some were legitimate; some were not.

I think it fed on what's happening internationally, and I think it created or added to divisions that already existed. For him to talk about us creating divisions is, as I said, somewhat ironic. We think it's important now that these people, who had been rebuffed once they made submissions, have their day to be heard and to express their concerns.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Kormos: On behalf of New Democrats here at Queen's Park, I'm going to begin our leadoff participation in this debate around Bill 27. Obviously, I won't be able to finish them today. I'm going to be here for around half an hour. I'll be back the next time the bill is called, hopefully some time next week.

New Democrats have some very serious concerns around this legislation, first in terms of the inadequacy of its response to the concerns held by so many people, the fears around so-called faith-based arbitration. That's number one. The second is that while the government would say it wants one law for all, this bill very much creates a two-tiered justice system here in the province of Ontario, and that's not something that I think, when it applies to the resolution of family law matters, is in the interest of litigants involved in those disputes or the interest of the general public.

It's been a debate where the disingenuousness of some of the participants has been frankly overwhelming and

very regrettable, because it doesn't add to the quality of the discussion for there to be that low, base level of discourse. It doesn't at all, especially when, as you know, the public discussion around this matter, whether it's by self-appointed leaders of communities or well-established leaders of those same communities, has not always, and perhaps not even more often than not, but certainly from time to time been vindictive, hateful and spiteful.

I regret that the public part of the debate, the public debate, the debate out there in communities as presented to people in the media—newspapers, radio and television—has nurtured some racism and some hateful commentary. I hope everybody here joins in condemning that part of the public discussion.

One of the first things I believe has got to be addressed is the fact that you don't need an Arbitration Act to have arbitration. Let's understand that; let's make that perfectly clear. Indeed in Ontario, and in Canada, it was the Arbitrations Act of 1889—the British Arbitrations Act of 1889—that prevailed for so many years, but that Arbitrations Act didn't create arbitrations. There's a valuable summary in the text *Commercial Arbitration*, by Mustill and Boyd, on page 43 that says, "The essence of a private arbitration, of the kind with which this book is concerned, is that the power of the tribunal to bind the parties by its decision derives from the consent of the parties themselves, and not from some external source."

1730

Do you understand what I'm saying? The arbitration that people participate in has nothing to do with some sort of legislative authority, the "external source." It's basically a contractual matter, an agreement between two people, two parties, to submit to a particular kind of dispute resolution—nothing more, nothing less. Indeed, even the very Arbitration Act of 1991, which is the act being amended in section 2 and which warrants some further discussion, says that this act, the Arbitration Act, "applies to an arbitration conducted under an arbitration agreement." The act applies to arbitrations. The root of the arbitration, the source of it, is the arbitration agreement. That's the statute. That's got to be understood very clearly and very carefully, and there's nothing the government can do, I believe, let's say constitutionally, to tell people that they can't make decisions or agreements around submitting to the authority of a third party for the purpose of resolving a dispute.

Which means, and let's make this very clear, nothing that the government is doing in the course of the progress of this Bill 27 can ever stop parties, spouses, from going to anyone, or to any religious leader of any particular faith. Nothing in this bill will stop, has the power to stop, any two parties, any two spouses, from going to any religious authority of any faith and asking that religious authority to resolve their dispute by adjudicating, by hearing the respective sides and making a judgment. Bill 27 doesn't stop people from doing that. In my view, one would be hard-pressed to design a law that could tell people not to do that.

For so many years, the prevalent law had been the British Arbitrations Act of 1889. Let's understand, because there has been some less than fair and candid commentary about the Arbitration Act of 1991. I was here. The act was being written in the Liberal bureaucracy before the New Democratic election of 1990. You will of course remember—and I was fortunate to have been in this Legislature—Attorney General Ian Scott, who was a strong promoter of alternative dispute resolution. It was during that same Ian Scott reign as Attorney General that the civil service in this province began work on what became the Arbitration Act of 1991. It's not to say that they drafted it, because they didn't. The Arbitration Act of 1991 was the Uniform Arbitration Act adopted in 1990 by the Uniform Law Conference of Canada. "The model legislation"—I should give credit, because I'm quoting from Julie Macfarlane, *Dispute Resolution: Readings and Case Studies*, page 538. This is her statement:

"The model legislation was based upon the United Nations Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration, the 1986 reform arbitration statute of British Columbia, and the law reform commission work in British Columbia and Alberta. The Uniform Arbitration Act (Uniform Law Conference of Canada, *Proceedings of the Seventy-Second Annual Meeting (ULCC, 1990)*, at page 86) was adopted in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. Parallel legislation is in force in Canada and Quebec. Similar legislation is in force in British Columbia. At the 1996 annual meeting of the ULCC, the justice department representatives of all Canadian jurisdictions"—including Ontario—"agreed to the modernization of their commercial law legislation, including implementation of the Uniform Arbitration Act, by the end of the century."

Of course, Ontario was already onside. The Attorney General of Ontario, a member of the Conservative government, as he was in 1996, joined other justice ministers in urging the balance of Canadian jurisdictions to similarly adopt the Uniform Arbitration Act, which is our Arbitration Act, 1991.

To somehow suggest, however inaccurately, that the Arbitration Act, 1991, served to bring church and state closer together is not only inaccurate but is a commentary that reveals a failure to understand what's written in the Arbitration Act, 1991, and the Uniform Arbitration Act. Howard Hampton's 1991 legislation, in section 2, very specifically indicated that the Arbitration Act "applies to an arbitration conducted under an arbitration agreement unless, (a) the application of this act is excluded by law," which is precisely what Quebec did in their civil code, where they excluded family law matters from the application of the Arbitration Act.

What does the application of the Arbitration Act mean? It certainly doesn't create the ability for two parties to contract to have a third party resolve their differences. The Arbitration Act means that that adjudication by the third party, if the arbitration is conducted in compliance with the act, can then be enforced by public

courts, that a private adjudication can be enforced by the public courts.

The Attorney General, from time to time, is of two minds. When he's under pressure in a scrum, he'll angrily refer to the Arbitration Act, 1991, as being "that bill of Howard Hampton's that caused the problem we're dealing with today." So you see, when the Attorney General is under pressure, he'll either misidentify pit bulls on a sheet of mug shots of pit bulls or he'll go after Howard Hampton and the New Democrats for the Arbitration Act, 1991, which of course all parties supported.

Let's take a look at what Robert M. Nelson, author of *Nelson on ADR*, Thomson Carswell, 2003, has to say about the 1991 Arbitration Act. Page 148: "The Arbitration Act, 1991 is a marked improvement over the previous act which had been in force in Ontario for almost 100 years. Its enactment, coupled with the International Commercial Arbitration Act of Ontario, means that the province of Ontario has implemented legislation which enables it to take its place as a jurisdiction friendly to domestic and international arbitrations. The act has many important features, and arbitral tribunals are given many important powers. The act codifies many common law principles and in doing so clarifies the role of the court in overseeing the arbitral process."

1740

What Hampton's Arbitration Act of 1991 did, contrary to the almost supercilious comments of some, was specifically permit the exclusion of family law from the application of the Arbitration Act. Do you understand what I'm saying? Because at common law, two parties, spouses, could agree in a far less restrained way to have anybody adjudicate their dispute, including a faith leader, including somebody from the church, mosque, temple or faith community. If I have omitted any places of worship for any particular faith, I apologize.

So Robert M. Nelson, Nelson on ADR, praises the Arbitration Act, 1991. I, quite frankly, found it pretty impressive myself. New Democrats are dismayed at the inability of this government to respond to the concerns around faith-based arbitration by anything other than invoking the power under section 2 of the Arbitration Act, 1991, to exclude family law matters from arbitration.

Further, take a look at what Mr. Justice Blair said in his judgment in *Ontario Hydro v. Denison Mines Ltd.* in January 1992, Ontario General Division. Mr. Justice Blair said this:

"The Arbitration Act, 1991 came into effect on January 1, 1992. It repealed the former Arbitrations Act ... and enacted a new regime for the conduct of arbitrations in Ontario. This new regime is more sophisticated than that of the former act and more consistent with international commercial arbitration practices. It is designed, in my view, to encourage parties to resort to arbitration as a method of resolving their disputes in commercial and other matters, and to require them to hold to that course once they have agreed to do so.

"In this latter respect, this new act entrenches the primacy of arbitration proceedings over judicial proceedings, once the parties have entered into an arbitration agreement, by directing the court, generally, not to intervene, and by establishing a 'presumptive' stay of court proceedings in favour of arbitration."

Let's also understand that arbitration, as a word used commonly by so many, effectively describes two processes. One, as described by Mustill and Boyd in the text *Commercial Arbitration*, page 4, is to regard arbitration as an aspect of public law. "The arbitrator is a delegate of judicial powers which are essentially the property of the state. The powers of enforcement or control are attached to the arbitral process because that process belongs to the state, even if called into existence by a private bargain. The state has the right and duty to ensure, through the medium of the courts, that the reference is conducted in accordance with procedural norms which the state itself lays down."

The Ontario Labour Relations Act, labour arbitration, is an example of that public arbitration. But we're talking here about the Arbitration Act and the utilization of private dispute resolution mechanisms with public arbitration; we're not talking about statutorily based arbitration. As I said, don't forget, you don't need the Arbitration Act to initiate an arbitration.

Similarly, that's where on page 4 Mustill and Boyd say, "Alternatively, the legal system may treat arbitration as a branch of private law. Recognizing the value of the institution, the state will lend its own coercive powers to reinforce the process at points of weakness. Nevertheless, the formulation of the rights, duties and powers of the arbitrator, and the mutual obligations of the parties in relation to the conduct of the reference, are created and regulated by the private bargain between the parties, and are no concern"—no concern—"of the state."

Further, on page 43 they say this, and this is very important: "The essence of a private arbitration, of the kind with which this book is concerned, is that the power of the tribunal to bind the parties by its decision derives from the consent of the parties themselves, and not from some external source."

New Democrats have been very clear: There is such a strong, overwhelming societal interest in how family law disputes are resolved, especially as they pertain to children and protecting their best interests, and especially in consideration of the power imbalances that oftentimes exist in spousal relationships, that it should only be the public law, as administered by the public courts, which can adjudicate these matters with coercive authority. We believe that very, very strongly. Our concern is that here the government has created a creature which is neither fish nor foul; it's a little bit Boyd, a little bit not. I say this to you: This bill does nothing to prevent a member of a faith community, such as a priest, a rabbi or an imam, with all of the biases—and I say that in a perfectly neutral way—that that faith presents from conducting arbitrations, and, furthermore, from conducting arbitrations that are covered under the Arbitration Act, because

they will purport to conduct those arbitrations and apply the law of the province of Ontario.

The law is not a mathematical thing; it's not a mathematical formula. An illustration of that is perhaps the family support guidelines. When you look at the chart, this is the income, this is the amount of support payable and this is the number of children. That's pretty mathematical. With the Family Law Act, any statute which calls upon parties to adjudicate disputes that fall within the scope of that statute obviously gives power and authority to the person making the decisions and provides parameters. So in this country of ours, where our courts are secular courts, we expect our courts to display no bias whatsoever, no bias based on any consideration—the ethnicity of the presiding authority, the adjudicator or judge; the gender or sex of the presiding authority, man or woman; or the religious beliefs of the presiding authority—Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and on and on.

These amendments to the Arbitration Act create a regime with its own bureaucracy, wherein the state will legitimize, by virtue of its purported regulation of these arbitrators and their faith-based arbitrations—the law that will be applied, according to the statute, is going to be the law of the province of Ontario and the law of any other province in Canada. But if there are people who have concerns about faith-based arbitration and the establishment of alternative court systems, Bill 27 doesn't address or deal with those concerns. Indeed, in many respects it should aggravate those concerns. Do you understand what I'm saying? There's nothing the government is doing in Bill 27 or that it can do to prevent people of any faith from going to their religious leader and asking who were to reply—for instance any law, including their faith-originated law, their faith-based law, however much any one of us might disagree with it.

1750

Look, most family differences, I believe, I suspect, are resolved without utilization of adjudication. Even when a marriage breaks down, most people—maybe not most, maybe many, I don't say more than 50%, but a whole lot of people may see lawyers to be advised of what their legal rights are but don't spend the thousands of dollars, and never mind the incredible emotional cost, of litigating, whether it's in a private court or a public court.

I want to refer you to the remarkable observation by Owen M. Fiss. In a response by him to advocates in the early to mid-1980s of that growing movement of alternative dispute resolution, including mediation and arbitration, Fiss had a very striking observation and comment to make. I'm referring now to Julie Macfarlane, *Dispute Resolution*, page 524: "Fiss believed that the leaders of such institutions were primarily motivated by concerns of efficiency in politics, by reduction of the caseload of the courts, and by insulation of the status quo from reform by the judiciary." I quote this comment of Fiss's: "Adjudication is more likely to do justice than conversation, mediation, arbitration, settlement, rent-a-judge, mini-trials, community moots or any other con-

trivance of ADR, precisely because it vests the power of the state in officials who act as trustees for the public, who are highly visible, and who are committed to reason." We're talking about judiciary now: "officials who act as trustees for the public, who are highly visible, and who are committed to reason." That's the public judiciary. Those are members of the bench. And understand that I'm not condemning ADR. I think I have a fairly good understanding of alternative dispute resolution processes and, similarly, a pretty good understanding of when and where they're desirable.

Let's take a look at arbitration in and of itself. The origins of arbitration are with the commercial world and the resolution of commercial disputes. You go down checklists. Any number of texts and authors have devised checklists of arbitration versus public court. Arbitration is private. There's no public disclosure. There's no public scrutiny. Nobody can go, like you can to the courthouse, and pull the statement of claim or statement of defence or documents filed on discovery. Do you understand? It's behind closed doors. You don't even have to have written reasons in the determination of an arbitration, and you can devise whatever process you want. You can even opt out of the law of the land, which is of course the concern around faith-based arbitrations, isn't it?

But there shouldn't just be a concern around faith-based arbitration; there should also be a concern about arbitration in the resolution of family law matters, for the very reasons that Fiss spoke to in the text that I just read you. "Adjudication"—he's talking about public adjudication in public courts by public judges—"is more likely to do justice than conversation, mediation, arbitration, settlement, rent-a-judge, mini-trials, community moots or any other contrivance of ADR, precisely because it vests the power of the state in officials who act as trustees for the public, who are highly visible, and who are committed to reason."

Why would the government want to create a system of regulated, private family law courts? Is it going to make it cheaper for litigants? I don't think so. Do you, Speaker? We're talking about private courts in the same way that we've regrettably had occasion to talk about private health care. There is a huge backlog in our family courts in this province, both in the family court provincial division—I know I've misnamed it, because the name has been upgraded—as well as in the superior courts and in the rare Unified Family Courts—no longer called Unified Family Courts, I believe. Huge backlogs.

Go to one of them. In these musty hallways, you've got people lined up. You've got husbands and wives and partners angry with each other, afraid of each other, frightened by each other, on opposite sides of the hallway. They're sitting in the courtroom pews. Their kids are there, their in-laws are there, their support groups, their friends—not inappropriately. They're sitting and waiting for hours and hours and hours until that exhausted judge and courtroom staff say, "Look, folks, the balance of today's docket is going to have to be adjourned for three more weeks." That's the problem.

So this government is addressing the problem by saying, "Oh, we'll create a regulated family court system that will let rich litigants have their family disputes adjudicated by private arbitrators in thickly carpeted offices on the umpteenth floor of some Bay Street high-rise." You see, people who are going to be entering into the arbitration regime proposed by this government are going to be hiring lawyers. They're going to be paying for the arbitrator. They're going to be paying out of pocket, just like private health care. They're going to be paying for a courtroom reporter if they want the proceedings recorded. And they could be paying for the imam, the rabbi, the priest or the minister to incorporate his or her, each and every one of them, religious values into their application of Ontario law. That isn't what the concern is about, is it? The concern was about faith-based arbitration, wasn't it? Regrettably, Bill 27 does not outlaw faith-based arbitration.

Speaker, I see by your desperate hand movements that you want me to cede the floor until next time. I do so with hesitation, because this is an incredibly important debate, it's an incredibly important discussion, and I urge all members to participate thoroughly. As well, New Democrats repeat their concern about this bill and their call upon this government to ensure there are adequate public hearings.

1800

The Acting Speaker: It now being 6 of the clock, and in accordance with the motion of the House, orders of the day.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SERVICES À L'ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 3, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 210, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 210, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Further debate? The member from Niagara Centre.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Thank you kindly, Speaker.

I'm certainly going to be the last New Democrat speaking to Bill 210. There has been extensive participation in this debate by my colleagues and other members of the Legislature.

I again want to caution the government, with real concern, about one particular aspect of this bill, and that is the statutory incorporation of mediation and other alternative dispute processes into determinations around the protection of children.

I first, though, want to speak to the openness orders, which begins at section 36 of the bill. These open

adoptions, because that's what they are—let's understand why a government would contemplate these and why we would be debating them.

I want to commend Sheila Volchert from down in Pelham. Jim Bradley knows her well and has done as much as he can to help her advance the interests of grandparents raising grandchildren. Let's be very careful, then, about what we contemplate by virtue of open adoption. Sheila Volchert, speaking for herself and for so many others—grandparents raising grandchildren—has advocated for open adoption. I was with her when she met with the Minister of Community and Social Services for the Conservative government, Ms. Brenda Elliott. When Ms. Volchert, on behalf of that huge community of grandparents raising grandchildren, pleaded for open adoption, I am confident that the bureaucracy in Ms. Elliott's ministry when she was minister—I am equally confident; much the same bureaucracy now as it was then—responded to that plea with the open adoption considerations in this bill.

Why were grandparents in particular advocating open adoption? Let me explain for those who might not understand what grandparents raising grandchildren go through. As often as not, it's a child of the grandparents, the parent of the children who are being cared for, who falls into a state of despair—drugs, alcohol, a totally off-the-track kind of lifestyle. The grandparents then, loving their grandchildren, rush in and take those kids from that natural parent, their own daughter—more often than not their daughter—and care for them. This is why the open adoption provisions are welcome, but there's so much more that has to be done to finish this picture. Those grandparents, then, many of them retired, many of them living on modest incomes because they're their fixed incomes, their pensions, undertaking to raise those grandchildren are the alternative to foster parents, yet find themselves with no financial support from family and children's services.

I support and endorse the call by grandparents who went—look, nobody is suggesting that merely by virtue of being the grandparent, you should be the person who has care and control of that child in need of protection. But I suggest to you that it goes a heck of a long way to determining that, and the only determinant that should rule against it would be a demonstration that that grandparent, in their own right, would not be a safe custodian. But, whereas foster parents, and not inappropriately—nobody is disputing the support that foster parents receive from family and children's services in terms of the allowance. Grandparents get nothing, and that is an incredible injustice. That's yet another, albeit a companion, piece to open adoption.

With respect, and I don't speak for all of my caucus colleagues in this regard, I am of the view that there should be termination of parental rights probably far more often than there are now and with far more certainty. The welfare of the child is far too important for that child to be ping-ponged back and forth between the grandparents or foster parents and—let's be candid here—a mother who's got a bad alcohol problem, a real

bad drug problem, who maybe goes into a 30-day program, cleans herself up and then shows up, wants the kids and gets her kids back. One understands her love for her kids, but then she falls back into the cycle and is back on the drugs, back on the booze, and then the kids go back to the foster parents and the grandparents.

Look, you know what happens. We just went through a major debate around adoption. The children who need adoptive parents in this province tend to be kids this old rather than kids this old because they've been ping-ponged for the first six to 10 years of their life. Sorry, but by the time that poor kid is this old, there are some serious problems there, hard-earned by that kid, let me tell you, and through no fault of his or her own.

I want to say very clearly what we need, and I'd be pleased to debate with this government's legislation around a process whereby there can be a more abrupt termination of so-called parental rights so that grandparents can have care and control, also custody, of a child or children without fear of that child being ping-ponged, without fear of the mother or father showing up six months later and the kid's back out again, and three months later they've got to go and protect the kid and pull the kid out of a crack house or what have you. It happens. I'm not making this stuff up. This is real life, people's real-life stories, however sad and sordid that is.

Why do these grandparents want open adoptions? It is essentially this, and it's as simple as this: They see this as a means whereby they can persuade a daughter or son to consent to the adoption by the grandparent of the grandchildren, with the understanding that that natural parent is going to have visitation rights or that there's going to be some form of contact as determined by—and again, this is where you look at the bill and you look at the sorts of contact orders that are made, and things get pretty fast and loose and uncertain around them.

1810

Open adoption isn't what most adoptees of infant children, whether those infant children are from Ontario, Canada or other parts of the world—it is not what they contemplate or want, or what the natural parents of those children have any right to expect, in my view. It's all about grandparents raising grandchildren, and it is a technique whereby parents can be encouraged to relinquish custody of their children so that grandparents can adopt them. Andrea Horwath, who is our critic on this matter, has asked—and I repeat her call—for this bill to go to committee.

New Democrats see a whole lot in this bill that warrants it being passed, but we also see some things in this bill that cause us great concern. One is the lack of completeness in that part of the bill around open adoption. It doesn't honestly or accurately address the real problem, because there are other pieces of the puzzle, like support for grandparents at the same level of the per diems paid to foster parents; like a *prima facie* preference for grandparents for custody of those grandchildren, subject to those grandparents clearly being demonstrated as being—you've got loving, caring grandparents who

have to compete with strangers to raise their grandkids. To me, that's just nuts. It's simply not right, it's not just, it's not fair, and it's not healthy. It's not good for the kid or kids.

I'll take you back, then, to section 5. That's the addition of some new sections to the act. There are a number of them that make reference to the ADR. I'll read the first one: "If a child is or may be in need of protection under this act, a society shall consider whether a prescribed method of alternative dispute resolution could assist in resolving any issue related to the child or a plan for the child's care."

I find that thoroughly objectionable. We're talking about the welfare of kids here. You and I both know that this is all about reducing the caseload in our family courts, the courts that have to deal with these matters. Judges—and presumably, we all know them or know of them—have got dockets that are page after page after page. Judges are working extremely hard, very hard. I think of Judge Lloyd Budgell, a family court judge down in Welland who I've known for a lot of years, and Wilma Scott up in St. Catharines. These are the family court judges. They have caseloads that are enormous. These people put in double-duty days and are making incredibly important decisions and, quite frankly, under the circumstances do a pretty darned good job of making those decisions and applying the law. But this is all about reducing their dockets. The judge says, "Look, family and children's services, why don't you utilize the new section 20.2 of the act and talk about maybe some mediation with the parent"—the parent whose child has been seized because that parent is doing whatever it is that that parent is doing that that child is a child in need of protection.

That's where I want to take an occasion earlier today to refer you to Owen Fiss. Let me tell you what he says about this sort of thing. Again, there are going to be people who disagree with Owen Fiss's analysis. I'm not saying that Owen Fiss is the be all and end all, but I'm saying we'd better listen carefully to what he had to say.

This was an essay by Fiss called "Against Settlement," 1984, 93 *Yale Law Journal*, page 1073: "I do not believe that settlement as a generic practice is preferable to judgment or should be institutionalized on a wholesale and indiscriminate basis. It should be treated instead as a highly problematic technique for streamlining dockets. Settlement is for me the civil analog of plea bargaining: Consent is often coerced; the bargain may be struck by someone without authority; the absence of a trial and judgment renders subsequent judicial involvement troublesome and although dockets are trimmed, justice may not be done. Like plea bargaining, settlement is a capitulation to the conditions of mass society and should be neither encouraged nor praised."

In the context of protecting children and finding solutions and setting up care plans for children in need of protection, nothing could be more appropriate. This government, Dalton McGuinty's Liberals, has continued to maintain courtrooms and courthouses and their staffing

in a dismal state of abandonment. The backlogs in family courts and civil courts make the criminal courtroom backlogs pale. While the criminal courtroom backlogs are provoking orgies of plea bargaining and Askov-provoked withdrawal of charges, in the civil courts, in the family courts, the huge backlogs are promoting entirely inappropriate settlements which are the farthest thing from justice being delivered or achieved. This government now wants to see it being done with, among other things, children in need of protection.

The solution isn't to legislate the utilization of, let's say, mediation, or perhaps you're thinking of arbitration—dare I say it? The solution isn't to legitimize and, by statute, impose alternative dispute resolution. The solution is to adequately staff our courts, to make sure there are adequate numbers of judges—I'm talking about the judges the province can appoint, provincial judges—serving in the family division and that there are adequate numbers of court staff. That means everything from the court clerks who organize the dockets and organize trial dates and set up the process, to courtroom stenographers who keep transcripts, as well as translators. Mr. Patten, you read recently about the crisis with translators here in the Toronto area and the miscarriages of justice that it caused. Those translator services—you are hard pressed to find a part of Ontario that is unilingual, or even bilingual, in the year 2005.

These are direct responsibilities of the provincial government. What could be more important when it comes to ensuring the adequate staffing and resourcing of our courts than when it comes to courts that deal on a daily basis with the protection of children? I say that to delegate plans for the future of children in need of protection to a settlement process that may be mediated or negotiated is beyond irresponsible, and is nothing more than this government's refusal to fulfill and meet its responsibilities in the delivery or the administration of justice in Ontario.

This is the very same as the amendments to the Arbitration Act, where once again the government is going to delegate these things, is going to pass them off into privatized arenas, and—

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. There are three conversations in here. There are people who are standing. Perhaps they would like to take a seat. Thank you. Please continue.

Mr. Kormos: What is the matter with those people? Can't they abide by the rules for just a few more minutes? Thank you for chastising them and taking them to task. I say to you, Speaker, I'm proud to see you seize the moment and take control of this chamber.

Andrea Horwath, our critic, has already indicated our need for public hearings. She has already indicated concern of northern aboriginal communities about this bill and its impact on them and their children.

I, on behalf of New Democrats, tell you that we are eager to participate in that committee forum and the debate that takes place there to move amendments as needed, and, should this bill require a third reading debate, to then further attempt to influence this government to do the right thing, the fair thing, the just thing for kids and for their grandparents who take care of those grandkids, people like Sheila Volchert, before this bill becomes law, should it ever in fact pass third reading.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any questions and comments? Seeing none, further debate? Seeing none, the minister has two minutes in which to respond if she so chooses.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): think there's really no reason for a response at this point in time. I'd like to follow through on the next steps here.

I will perhaps just take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues on all sides of this House for their thoughtful contributions to this debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mrs. Chambers has moved second reading of Bill 210, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I heard a no, very definitely.

To which committee shall the bill be referred?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I would ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

The Acting Speaker: Accordingly, the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

It now being well past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until tomorrow at 10 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1823.

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Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Deuxième session, 38^e législature

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Jeudi 24 novembre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 November 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 novembre 2005

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT), 2005

LOI DE 2005

MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (PARTICIPATION COMMUNAUTAIRE)

Mr. Fonseca moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to community involvement activity hours and board support / Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation à l'égard des heures d'activité et de l'appui des conseils au titre de la participation communautaire.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Fonseca, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): Volunteering is an incredible experience, where we share and learn from others and we all grow.

I have to say that my personal experiences with volunteering have been some of the most rewarding in my life. I can recall a time when I was invited out to a community, a community that didn't have very much in terms of things, material goods; it was a lower socio-economic community. I was asked to come out and work with a running group and take a bunch of little runners out for a jog and talk a little bit about track and field. I remember arriving there with my equipment, putting my bag down and seeing about 40 eager little runners coming toward me and asking me all sorts of different questions, many not dealing with track and field or with running; they were more to do with my personal life: where I grew up and what I like to eat and what I like to do etc. Anyway, we went out for this little run, and when we came back—I was asked by a community volunteer to come out and provide this workshop. We had a whole lot of fun. There was a whole lot of learning there, and I learned so much from them.

At the end of this workshop, once we were done, I was packing up my bag, and one of those little runners came to me and put out his hands with a T-shirt that he had been wearing. It was a T-shirt from the club, and he was offering it to me. I thought, "Wow, this is amazing." This

little runner probably didn't have a lot of T-shirts in his closet, but for him to be giving me that, I felt that he must have got something from what I did for him that day, or for the group. I accepted it, and grabbed a shirt from my bag and gave it to him. That was a volunteer experience that was so rewarding. From that young gentleman I've got back tenfold what I put in. This was about 15 years ago, so I'm sure he's very successful today. I saw great leadership skills and great enthusiasm in that little runner.

All other experiences I've had with volunteerism have been rewarding. I was working with the air cadets, and going out and doing the poppy drive and gathering funds for our veterans. Working with the Special Olympics has been so rewarding. That is why I have asked to amend the Education Act and provide that the program where today secondary school students must now put in 40 hours of volunteer time to be able to graduate be increased to 60 hours. That is because I've done much consultation with the community. In this rewarding job that we have as MPPs, and where much of our work takes place in our community—in my community of Mississauga East, having gone to schools and hospitals, the Salvation Army and seniors centres, all of these different organizations really need those volunteers to survive, to thrive, to be able to be the best that they can be.

They've all told me that it has been unbelievable to have all these young volunteers come and work with them, but there have been some challenges. Those challenges have been around the number of hours and also the policies, the procedures, the process that is involved in this program from school board to school board and school to school. Here's what they said: Today it's 40 hours, and most students do get the 40 hours done and the volunteerism is a rewarding experience to them. But some students wait until the last minute, procrastinate somewhat, and then put in all 40 hours in the last couple of months. When you do that, you may be doing it for the wrong reasons.

Yes, this is a terrific program and I think we should increase the hours. I've consulted with many students, and those who start early, in grade 9 or 10, and get a few hours in, do well beyond 40 hours. Many of them that I've spoken with have put in 200 and 300 hours. They find that this has been incredible. The people they have met, the skills they have learned to make them successful citizens, to get a better understanding of the community, to be that glue in the community, have been wonderful.

We do know that those who start early do a lot more than 40 hours and get a much more wholesome experi-

ence, and that is why I've asked that we build in, that we increase it to 60 hours to help groups with volunteerism and to provide policies, procedures and process to the school boards to get those students started earlier and to build linkages with the community.

1010

Often students will find that the barriers are, "Well, I don't know what I can do. Where can I volunteer?" I want to make sure that those barriers get taken away, so that the student knows he can volunteer with something like—it could be a one-off, like tsunami relief, or it could be something like helping a senior in their neighbourhood in terms of going to get groceries for that senior, or maybe at this time of year, shovelling their walk or their driveway or doing some leaf raking—

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Putting up their Christmas lights.

Mr. Fonseca: Putting up their Christmas lights, yes, as the great member from Peterborough has just recommended. We have to look at many of these things, all the opportunities that exist out there in the community. They don't have to think just about traditional volunteerism. Many volunteers do it also through their church, their temple, their mosque or their synagogue. There are so many opportunities. The thing is that we have to make sure that students are aware of those opportunities as soon as they come into grade 9, and that they get started early so that they get that full experience from volunteering.

I can go through a number of endorsements from people who have spoken very positively to this change: From Her Worship, Mayor Hazel McCallion: "Volunteerism is a vital part of our society and it is especially important to get this message across to young people. For youth, volunteering brings a sense of confidence and enables them to develop their communication and social skills that will be invaluable to them later in life"; from Peel Senior Link; from the past president of United Generations Ontario, who says, "By providing these opportunities to our youth and them being able to interact with our seniors, there is a way to fill that gap between generations," which sometimes is difficult, because we don't understand each other when there is that generational gap; from Michael Bator, director of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, "Our schools provide a setting within which volunteerism can be nurtured, not just as a natural and logical extension of good learning, but rather as an integral part of our community development."

It's about good citizenship, about being selfless, about understanding others. Many times, there are those who live in a different socio-economic strata, different neighbourhoods, and we don't understand each other. Wouldn't it be great to break down those barriers, to have somebody go into a community that they don't understand, work with a different ethnic group other than their own, and be able to get a flavour for other neighbourhoods, for the world? These are all invaluable experiences that cannot be gotten without volunteerism.

Often when we go into a regular job, we're doing that job and we're in a setting that we may like, or not, and we're there to raise some funds. But with volunteerism, the world is your oyster. You can do anything you'd like to do. You're able to find what you're passionate about. If you love sports, go volunteer with a sports group, a recreational group. If you love to bake or cook, do so with a food bank or provide some food. Whatever you desire, you can find that opportunity through volunteerism. That's why I've asked all our members here to support this change in the legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's my pleasure and privilege to rise today to speak in support of Bill 19 by my colleague from Mississauga East. Many of the members here today will speak to their legislative colleagues to ask support for the bill or to suggest areas in which it might be amended. I'd like to speak to the many thousands of young men and women who will be affected by this bill, if it is passed, and who today are working to get their 40 hours of community service accomplished before graduation.

Earlier this week, I visited Erindale Secondary School in Mississauga to speak to a grade 12 business class about leadership and teamwork. Today's teens want to make a difference, just as they did when I was a teen or when my parents were teens.

Between 1994 and 2003, I had the pleasure of teaching in the school of business studies at Ryerson University in Toronto. There I taught the 20-somethings. Students at all levels are concerned with doing well as they move forward in life. Anyone who works with today's young people knows that we're leaving our future in the hands, in the hearts, and in the minds and consciences of an outstanding generation of young people.

How do we help young people get a good start in life? One way is to show by example that learning is a process that happens outside the classroom and that learning is a lifelong process that should be an essential part of the lives of concerned and involved citizens of tomorrow. Volunteerism is one of the strongest of those lifelong learning habits and principles. But even good habits have to be learned, and every skill worth having needs to be practised over and over in many settings through the years.

Right now, high school students require 40 hours of community time before they graduate. The member from Mississauga East proposes that today's 40 hours of community time be 60 hours of community time. One may ask, what difference would an extra 20 hours of volunteer community service make? It brings to mind the old story about the young boy who stops a man in downtown Toronto asks him, "Sir, how do I get to Roy Thomson Hall?" The man looks at the young boy and replies, "Practice, my young friend, practice."

That is the difference those 20 hours will make. Those extra 20 hours are the difference between scrambling in the closing weeks of a student's final year and learning to plan for an activity that needs to be a part of the life of

every involved and concerned Canadian. Those extra 20 hours represent the practice that might change the student's perception of volunteering from an obligation or chore into a vocation that's intrinsically rewarding and one that the student looks forward to rather than shies away from. More importantly, the larger challenge for high school students is also a vital and precious treasure of time that our community-based organizations can call upon to make those very communities better.

When I'm in Mississauga classrooms talking about our communities and our neighbourhoods and I ask students who in their lives, outside their families, do they look up to as a role model, we normally find that most of those teenage and childhood role models were volunteers. They were coaches. They were people who taught skills in the arts: dance, music and language. Each year in Mississauga, we host the annual Ontario volunteer awards, and it has gotten so big that we've had to split it over two days rather than one. We've rewarded hundreds and hundreds of men and women, many of whom have served upwards of 20 years in volunteer capacities in our community. Some have served five years. And it's very rewarding to see that each year we begin to recognize more and more young people.

Volunteers serve in public safety within our police forces. Volunteers serve aboard our transit systems. Volunteers keep heritage languages and cultures alive through their service in ethnocultural organizations. Volunteers also make our political organizations function.

One day at the Mississauga annual volunteer awards, I asked what was the aggregate total of volunteer years that the people being awarded would contribute, and the aggregate total, if you could imagine it as an imaginary tunnel in time, would take you from today back into the days of ancient Rome. That's the sheer scale of the contribution that volunteers have made.

There are challenges inherent in Bill 19. Right now, the onus on doing 40 hours rests largely on the student. Few community organizations plan for the available time that students have to offer; fewer still have assigned tasks and jobs that can be delegated to students who are making up their community hours.

In rural areas, the fabric of social services is often spread thinner than it is in densely populated areas. In some areas, people have observed that opportunities are fewer. As well, within some families students need to convert some of their time into cash to help make their families go or to save for their education. The proposal put forth by the member from Mississauga East in Bill 19 is good news. It's one that I think deserves consideration in committee, and it's one that I urge in second reading.

1020

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Bill 19 requires that students in the senior division complete no less than 60 hours of community involvement before receiving their secondary school diploma. Bill 19, as proposed by the member from Mississauga East, is laudable. I listened with great attention to what he had to say and I'm totally convinced that Bill 19 is good for Ontario students.

As we know, on December 5, which is just nine days away, the United Nations will recognize International Volunteer Day, so this bill comes in at exactly the right time.

What does this bill actually propose? We know that to develop skills and gain some experience in real life—some kids in my neighbourhood, for instance, are born entrepreneurs. I know that the majority of the members here had either a paper route when they were 14 or a part-time job when they were 15 or some such experience that developed skills. You were telling me just now that you were 16 when you took your paper route—

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I was six.

Mr. Ruprecht: Six years old; can you image that? That's just great. The major point in all this is that skills have to be developed, and this is one of the biggest and greatest ways in which skills can be developed by young people.

We should ask ourselves, with Bill 19, this question: How do we best prepare our kids for the future? That question has been answered in a great book. It's called *The New Psycho-Cybernetics*, and it's by Dr. Maltz. He asks in this book, what's the best indicator for the future success of the child? What's the best indicator that the child will be well developed, will be healthy and will be successful in the future? Do you know what he comes up with? It boils down to a question of self-esteem, a sense of confidence that the child can do something well. That is a great indicator. I know as well it involves the love of parents and the appreciation of the community. It indeed takes a community to raise a child, and what better way than Bill 19? What better way than to ask our children for 60 hours of community service, to volunteer, which is one of the greatest Christian virtues that we take from our own tradition here?

When we look at the indicators of why a child is successful, in this book Dr. Maltz says it isn't race that makes the big difference between the success of a child in the future and depression or an unsuccessful future; it isn't necessarily parent education that's the big indicator; it isn't even the income that makes the difference between a child's future success and future failure; and it isn't even sex, that is, whether a child is male or female. What it boils down to is a sense of confidence that the child can do something well. What better way for our children to experience that wellness than in providing either some sense of help to senior citizens or some sense of help in our community? Therefore, I'm convinced that Bill 19 is good for Ontarians and certainly good for our children's future.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I'm delighted today to get up and speak to the idea and the notion that volunteerism in our youth is an important concept that we need to encourage and nourish in our society.

In my riding, we have a number of students who volunteer wholeheartedly in the program that is offered through their high school. As you know, Mr. Speaker, and as many in the House know, I've spent a lot of time

working in long-term care over the last two years. One of the things that I've learned in my time in long-term care is the importance of this program to our long-term-care homes across the province. Through this program, we are able to attract youth into volunteer programs in our long-term-care homes and really improve the quality of life for our seniors. As many people in this chamber know as well, the volunteer award program that the government has instituted, where we recognize each fall our volunteers across the province, has a special component for our youth, where we again recognize those youth who have contributed so much to our community.

In my community of Nipissing, I have instituted an award, and it's based on the fact that our students are required to provide 40 hours of service. What I've done is gone and sought out through the guidance counsellors those students who have really devoted themselves to the program, who have contributed above and beyond the 40 hours and have really shown a commitment to volunteerism and to community service. I've instituted an award in my riding, which I present at all of the graduations in my community. It's the Dick Smith award. It's named in honour of my father, who, as you know, was a member here in this Legislature for 12 years and contributed a great deal to the community. I know that for him, volunteerism was a really important notion. He certainly encouraged us as children to volunteer in a number of different activities and was very committed to recognizing the volunteers who worked so hard in our community, the unsung heroes. I think those unsung heroes don't actually just spring up, but have to be encouraged and have to be recognized.

In my community, in 2004, I recognized the following students who, instead of 40 hours toward their volunteer service program, had in some cases contributed over 1,000 hours of volunteerism: At Scollard, we recognized Tara McKay; at Widdifield, Amanda-Jean Beschamps; at West Ferris, Kurtis Robinson; at F.J. McElligott, on the English side, Ashlee Edmonds, and on the French side, Robyn Bangs; at Algonquin, Nathalie Desrosiers; and at Chippewa, Sarah-Jayne McKenzie.

This year again, in June, I was delighted to be able to recognize the 2005 award winners: at Scollard, Darren Daniel Louis Jobin; at Widdifield, Kaitlin Merritt; at West Ferris, Cheryl Zinn; at F.J. McElligott, on the French side, Kevin Gendron, and on the English side, Melissa Graham; at Algonquin, Emilie Vezina; and at Chippewa, Stewart Everitt.

All of those students have contributed so very much to our community and have really created a sense of community through their involvement in the volunteer program.

I know that 40 hours is a huge commitment for some of our students. For some of our students, especially in the rural communities, there is a challenge. But I think we have to work with our school boards in order to recognize some forms of volunteer work that may be broader than the definition that we now have for volunteer work. I think it is important that we nurture this pro-

gram and encourage our students to link into their communities and contribute wherever they can, be it a fall fair, an agricultural fair. At home we have the heritage festival in the summer over the August long weekend, where we have so many students who volunteer and put in 40 hours just over that weekend, because they spend so much time at the heritage festival contributing to the safety and well-being of all of our guests. We invite so many people to the heritage festival; there are thousands who attend every year.

There are a number of opportunities for our students to achieve the hours that they're required to achieve now, and I'd just like to take this opportunity to commend all of those students who throw themselves wholeheartedly into the program and encourage them to keep contributing to their communities. It's a good foundation, and it makes great citizens of the future. So I commend my colleague for this bill, and I am delighted to be able to speak to it today.

Mr. Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 19 this morning, brought forth by the member from Mississauga East, I believe.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): Yes.

1030

Mr. Yakabuski: Thank you very much. I can't find it, but I rely on my memory from time to time, and it does actually work sometimes.

I support the bill that the member has introduced in the Legislature. It was the PC government that introduced the concept of volunteer hours, community service hours, as a part of achieving a secondary school graduation diploma. We have seen the importance of that initiative, and the member's interest in increasing that to 60 hours is something I support.

The importance of volunteerism has been touched on by both the member from Mississauga East and the member from Mississauga West. It is something that cannot be overlooked, and we support that tremendously. When you look at all our communities, they simply wouldn't exist, or they would look vastly different, without the efforts of volunteers and the contributions they make. The idea of introducing young people to the practice of volunteerism at an earlier age is something that needs to be encouraged. You are far more likely to be an adult volunteer if you've been involved as a volunteer as a young person than if you are asked at the age of 30 or so, "Would you like to join one of our volunteer organizations?" The likelihood is far greater if you've been involved as a young person.

As was said, it is a challenge for so many people to continue to be volunteers, but the number of volunteers we have in our community today and the number of ceremonies we have honouring them are very important: an indication of the number of volunteers and the importance of their service to the community. When my daughter Emily went into grade 9, she completed her 40 hours of volunteer community service before the year was halfway finished. But she had a lot of opportunities to do so. We encouraged her, and she wanted to do it on

her own as well, and she has continued to work in that capacity.

However, there are some rural challenges that make it more difficult for people to get to those places that can offer them the opportunity to fulfill this obligation. The member said that school boards have to be supportive with programs and policies. That's easy to say. But what we're not getting is support from the Minister of Education and the ministry with regard to rural support. Five rural schools have been closed in my riding this year, and the transportation issue in my riding is becoming more critical every day. The people who operate buses are even concerned that they can no longer stay in the business of getting our children to and from school safely. So the challenge of volunteerism for these people grows ever greater.

I would say to the member that the pressure has to be put on his Minister of Education to support transportation in rural areas and to stop dithering. He's had two years to deal with this. He promised to keep rural schools open. He broke that promise. He has promised to support them in the transportation issues, and he is breaking that promise as we speak. Every day, the circumstances surrounding rural transportation become more and more desperate in ridings like my own of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

While there is great reason to support this bill, and I think communities as a whole will benefit by it and the students themselves will benefit by it, we have to understand that every area is not exactly the same. The circumstances that volunteer students trying to achieve those community hours have to face in ridings like mine of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke are different from those in Mississauga East or Mississauga West. The minister, who has been missing in action on the file with regard to support for rural schools, had better show his face and show it soon and show some support for those people.

Ms. Scott: I'm very pleased to speak in the Legislature today in support of the bill presented by the member from Mississauga East, the Education Amendment Act, which would increase the number of volunteer hours required of high school students from 40 to 60 and also require school boards and schools to take a more active role in assisting young people in completing their volunteer hours.

I represent the very rural riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, with a number of organizations, charities and foundations. I know first-hand the value of volunteering. In my household, volunteering was a way of life; I just didn't know it was called volunteering. We all participated in all our community events and gave our hours. It was a great building block for any young person.

Since I've had the opportunity to be the representative from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, I'd say my favourite job is going out and thanking all the volunteers for the many, many hours of time and the effort and energy they put into various organizations within the riding for worthy causes.

Every year, the majority of Ontarians are compelled to donate canned goods to our local food bank, drop off toys

at the children's charities and run or walk in fundraising events. These are tiny gestures when compared to the significant commitment made by the diverse community we have of dedicated volunteers throughout our whole province. Really, they are the true unsung heroes, these volunteers. The toy drives they organize, the sleepless nights they spend staffing arts and cultural festivals—they're people who interact with community leaders to bring together the funding, manpower and resources that are necessary to launch the ambitious fundraising events. It can be selfless and, at times, thankless, which makes the introduction of volunteering to young Ontarians all the more important.

I commend the member from Mississauga East for his efforts to uphold the tradition of giving back to the less fortunate in our communities. This is an invaluable lesson to teach young people that cannot be emphasized enough. When I go to the high schools, sometimes they give me a hard time about the 40 hours they have to do before they leave. But 10 hours per year is not a lot. We need to really re-emphasize that to our young people.

The bill would incorporate volunteer activities within the instructional time on a school day. If a class should wish to adapt their educational lessons into a clothing drive, a fundraising project or a community cleanup assignment, they are free to earn the credited volunteer hours to put toward their high school diploma. I think that's a brilliant idea. The ones I just mentioned are only a few of the many inventive examples that high school students across the province are devoting their free time to.

We have to encourage more young people to volunteer in their community. It's not only the less fortunate who benefit. Many studies have shown that connecting youth with non-profit charitable organizations brings out the best qualities in young people themselves: Improvements occur in their academic performance, there's an increased level of self-esteem, and social skills are enhanced, not only among their peers but with adults. The most important improvement in the life of young volunteers is the invaluable lesson they receive in empathy.

"Experience learning," as this is, is often used to describe non-traditional learning strategies and settings. Volunteering is the ultimate opportunity for this type of experience learning. The enriched experience of young people in a volunteer environment helps us to build healthier, safer communities.

Family Services of Haliburton county, in my riding, offers an impressive, up-to-date on-line system that lists volunteering opportunities. The training, supervision and support staff services provided by the staff of Family Services of Haliburton County are exhaustive. Those staffers ensure that all volunteers are well trained and entirely comfortable with their volunteer responsibilities.

I know the young people have busy, busy lives, but I think there's a lot of enthusiasm. If we can educate them to the benefits—I tell them, "It's great networking; you get to meet great people. Don't pass up this opportunity. Yes, it's mandatory now, but it will come back to you tenfold within your community."

I'm very happy to support the member from Mississauga East's bill today, and I'm sure all members of the House will do so.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I am certainly going to support the proposal made here. But what I am not sure of, Speaker, is whether, at the time the previous government introduced the concept of mandatory community involvement, the honourable member's party supported that. In fact, my recollection—I'm checking with the table to see what the vote was at the time. I stand to be corrected, and if so, let the record so show. There was considerable debate at the time, you will recall, because you were part of the debate, and I do believe the Liberal caucus at the time voted against the concept of community volunteerism on the part of our young people. The idea at the time was very simple, and that is to get young people familiar with the concept of becoming involved in their community and doing their part.

1040

There are really two aspects of this legislation. One is the idea of increasing the required number of hours from 40 to 60. The second is to provide resources to ensure that students have the opportunity to become involved. I'm not sure about the increase from 40 to 60 hours, frankly. I'm not going to struggle on this one, but if the idea is to engage young people in the concept of volunteerism, to introduce them to the concept of volunteerism, whether an additional 20 hours really makes that much difference or not, I'm not convinced.

Here is something that is not in the bill that I think perhaps should be in the bill, now that we've had some time to contemplate the practical implications, and that is that, right now, school time or instructional time within the school day is not allowed to be considered part of the volunteer activity. In other words, if an activity was to arise within the community and that activity happens to be during instructional time, it doesn't qualify for this volunteer time. I think that would be a legitimate amendment to the proposed legislation and perhaps something that could be considered by the minister. Many opportunities would occur where, during instructional time, a community event takes place. Let's engage young people in that, enable them to participate in that and have that qualify. Right now, even with this bill before us, that wouldn't be accommodated.

Another aspect here is an issue—it was referenced briefly—particularly amongst rural students, and that is their ability to get to the place where they would volunteer. This Minister of Education is already shortchanging school boards across the province in terms of transportation facilities and accommodating resources for transportation. This would certainly be something I would support, in terms of ensuring that transportation opportunities are made available, through busing to events within a community, from a school to a public event where young people can volunteer and become engaged. That's a practical application of this, but good luck to the honourable member to convince his Minister of Education to do that, because his Minister of Education is refusing to fund even the basic shortfalls within

the transportation requirements of our school system in rural schools.

In the final analysis, I will of course in principle support the bill, because volunteerism is good. It's appropriate for young people to become engaged in volunteer activities. It's appropriate for the school boards to encourage that. I'm very pleased to say that the York region school boards, both the public and the Catholic boards, have been engaged in this for many years, even before the legislation made it a mandatory requirement. So with regard to this proposal before us, I would say that I welcome the new-found faith that the Liberal caucus has in volunteerism. I'm glad they have seen the light, and I will support them in ensuring that we can make this more accessible for young people, that we can overcome some of the barriers that may well be in the way of young people becoming more actively engaged in their community.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): C'est le fun d'être ici avec vous ce matin pour débattre cette résolution. Je veux dire premièrement que la résolution telle que—sur le principe, je pense qu'il n'y a pas un député dans la Chambre qui va dire, « Je suis contre le monde qui fait du bénévolat. » Je ne pense pas que c'est quelque chose qu'un député veut se mettre sur le record en disant qu'il est contre. Mais il y a un couple d'affaires, et on a besoin d'être clair avec ce projet de loi comme on a eu besoin d'être clair quand les conservateurs ont introduit la notion—je pense en 1996 ou 1997, quand ils l'ont fait la première fois—de forcer quelqu'un à faire du travail volontaire.

Premièrement je pense que, aujourd'hui, la plupart de nos jeunes sont très respectueux, ils travaillent fort, ils sont sérieux et ils veulent avancer dans la société. J'ai une grosse confiance en la jeunesse d'aujourd'hui. Il y a beaucoup de monde qui disent des fois, quand ils deviennent un peu plus vieux, « Les jeunes d'aujourd'hui ne sont pas comme ils étaient dans le passé. » Non, ils ne sont pas comme ils étaient dans le passé. Je pense qu'ils sont plus éduqués, qu'ils sont plus éveillés et qu'ils comprennent mieux leur place dans la société, même jusqu'à un certain point plus que nous autres on a compris quand on avait 15, 16 ou 17 ans.

Le point que je veux faire est que la plupart de ces jeunes-là sont déjà engagés dans leur communauté. Ils ont fait parti des scouts; ils ont fait parti des cadets de l'armée, de la marine et de l'air. Ils ont fait parti de différents groupes dans leurs communautés. Donc ce n'est pas comme les jeunes d'aujourd'hui : les jeunes d'il y a 10 ans n'ont jamais fait du travail volontaire. Je veux mettre ça sur le record parce que c'était une partie du débat qui m'avait un peu ennuyé quand on l'avait eu la première fois, quand les conservateurs ont introduit les changements à la Loi sur l'éducation, je pense en 1996 ou 1997, où ils ont dit, « On va forcer les jeunes à faire du volontaire. » Nous, les néo-démocrates, tels que les libéraux de la journée, disions, « Écoute, on n'est pas contre l'idée de mettre un mécanisme en place pour aider les jeunes à faire du travail volontaire quand ils sont en secondaire, mais on a un problème avec la question de

forcer le monde à faire quelque chose. » Une société libre, quant à moi, est une société où on donne aux individus des choix et où on essaie de renforcer les choix d'une manière positive. Je pense que c'est le point que je veux faire.

On va supporter la motion parce qu'on pense, à la fin de la journée, que ce n'est pas une méchante idée de trouver des manières pour augmenter les mécanismes nécessaires pour faire cet ouvrage volontaire—ça fait partie de la motion que le député a soulevé—mais, comme je le vous dis pour le record, je veux faire un couple de points.

Premièrement, sur la question des jeunes faisant du travail volontaire : ce qui manque présentement dans nos écoles, c'est le mécanisme pour aider les jeunes à faire leur placement de volontaire. Comme on le sait présentement, il y a deux manières du programme dans le secondaire. Il y a premièrement les programmes coop, où les jeunes vont travailler quelque part pour une période de temps et rechercher des expériences de travail pour les aider à faire un choix de, en 11^e ou 12^e année, où qu'ils veulent aller quand ça vient au postsecondaire; s'ils veulent aller à l'université ou au collège—quel choix ils veulent faire comme job.

Le programme coop fait, dans mon opinion, beaucoup de bon sens. Une lacune qu'on a dans le système, quand on connaît tout, est que le système d'éducation, les écoles secondaires et les commissions scolaires, n'a pas la capacité, n'a pas le financement nécessaire pour vraiment mettre en place toutes les opportunités possibles pour permettre aux jeunes de faire des choix quand ça vient au programme coop. Je sais que, par exemple, dans notre communauté on a du personnel qui est très dévoué, comme Marcel Camirand et autres, qui travaille dans la commission scolaire pour être capable de mettre en place ces programmes coop. S'il y a une plainte que j'entends dire par les jeunes, par le monde comme Marcel et aussi par le staff à la commission scolaire et par le secteur privé, c'est que des fois on n'a pas le financement nécessaire pour être capable d'assister les employeurs à faire de la place dans leur milieu de travail pour ces jeunes-là.

Je pense qu'une affaire que j'aimerais faire est que le gouvernement provincial fait tout ce qui est possible pour assurer que les employeurs sont accommodés pour donner une chance aux jeunes de rentrer au milieu de travail. Par exemple, supposons qu'un jeune veut devenir électricien. Il y a très peu d'opportunités parmi les employeurs chez nous pour faire un coop pour ces jeunes-là pour aller travailler dans une mine, dans une scierie ou au moulin à pâtes et papier parce qu'il y a certaines accommodations qu'on a besoin de faire dans un moulin. On a besoin de s'assurer avec le syndicat. On a besoin de s'assurer que les affaires sont faites d'une manière où la convention collective est respectée. Deuxièmement, il y a toute la question de sécurité. On a besoin de s'assurer que les jeunes-là sont bien entraînés, avant de rentrer dans le milieu de travail—au danger du milieu de travail. Numéro trois, il faut préparer les jeunes pour ce qu'ils vont expérimenter une fois qu'ils sont rentrés dans le

milieu de travail et qu'ils commencent à travailler sur la machinerie. Imaginez-vous un jeune de 17 ans qui rentre dans le moulin à Kapuskasing ou dans une scierie à Hearst ou dans une mine à Timmins, et que tout à coup il regarde un morceau d'équipement avec un moteur de 2 000 forces. C'est pas mal grave; c'est pas mal dangereux. Il faut s'assurer que ces jeunes-là sont préparés pour cette expérience.

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Une affaire que je veux voir est qu'on met emphase sur supporter nos commissions scolaires pour être capables de mettre en place ce qui est nécessaire pour aider ces jeunes-là à faire l'expérience du programme coop. Je pense, comme dernier point que je veux faire sur le programme-là, qu'il faut aussi reconnaître que c'est une excellente initiative pour aider nos jeunes à faire un choix qui fait du bon sens. Une partie du problème est que, comme on sait—quand j'avais 16 ans, 17 ans, je voulais être astronaute, ingénieur, en avion, je voulais faire bien des affaires, mais les moyens, la capacité, n'était pas là. Je n'avais pas les capacités financières, au moins l'éducation, pour le faire. Un peu plus tard—

Mr. Fonseca: You're a pilot.

M. Bisson: I'm a pilot now but that's a different story. I was forced to fly. That's another issue.

Ce qui arrive, c'est qu'on devient plus capable de faire des décisions sur où on veut travailler si on a des expériences à travers notre secondaire dans un placement coop. Je pense que le coop ne doit pas arriver qu'une seule fois. Je pense qu'on doit avoir un programme coop qui commence en neuvième et finit en douzième pour que les jeunes puissent avoir de différentes expériences. Possiblement, le coop de la neuvième année est moins intense que celui de la douzième, mais cela donne aux jeunes—j'ai vu le sciage, j'ai vu les métiers, j'ai vu la technique, l'ingénieur et différentes affaires qui donnent aux jeunes l'opportunité de faire un choix.

Les mêmes principes ont besoin d'être appréciés et, je pense, acceptés quand ça vient au programme de volontaires. Une affaire qu'on entend très bien auprès des étudiants c'est que les commissions scolaires, les secondaires, n'ont pas la capacité parfois de les aider à faire des choix pour le programme où ils veulent faire du bénévolat. Par exemple, il y a beaucoup d'opportunités de faire du travail volontaire dans une communauté qui n'est pas reconnue dans le programme présent. Des jeunes qui veulent aller faire du travail volontaire dans certains domaines ne sont pas vus comme pouvant le faire—contre le caractère qu'ils sont supposés avoir. Je pense qu'on a besoin de faire une expansion d'où on peut faire du travail volontaire. Quant à moi, le travail volontaire doit être bien proche, n'importe où, si ça ne marche pas sur les droits de la personne et que ça ne fait pas d'affaires négatives.

Par exemple, j'ai parlé aux députés. Dans la dernière élection, en 2003, on a eu pas mal de jeunes, une vingtaine de jeunes, à Timmins, et d'autres à Kap et à Hearst, qui sont venus faire du travail volontaire dans la campagne chez nous. J'imagine que les libéraux et les conservateurs ont eu la même affaire. Je pense que c'était

une excellente opportunité pour un jeune d'être capable d'expérimenter un peu ce que c'est, la politique, comment c'est organisé, comment on écrit des dépliants, comment tu fais les médias et comment tu prends contact avec le public. Ça donne aux jeunes une opportunité excellente d'apprendre un peu plus sur leur communauté et d'apprendre plus sur la question de comment ça marche, la politique. Dans ce cas-là, ces heures de volontaires ne peuvent pas être comptées, ce qui est triste, parce que la dernière fois que j'ai vérifié, il n'y avait rien de mal dans le fait d'être un politicien. Ce n'est pas une méchante affaire. Deuxièmement, le processus politique démocratique n'est pas une méchante affaire. Pourquoi ne compte-t-on pas notre expérience pour avoir nos heures de volontaire?

L'autre point que je ferais est sur la question de s'assurer que les commissions scolaires ont la capacité et le financement nécessaires pour aider les jeunes à faire leur choix et à les supporter dans ce choix. Par exemple, parfois l'école secondaire n'a pas le personnel nécessaire pour aider les jeunes à faire des choix sur où ils peuvent aller pour rechercher leurs heures de volontaires. Je pense que c'est triste, parce que ça minimise jusqu'à un certain point les choix que les jeunes peuvent prendre sur ce point-là. Je veux dire aux députés libéraux qui ont mis cette motion en place que je n'ai pas de problème avec le concept, mais je veux être clair pour le record : je ne suis pas bien d'accord avec l'idée de forcer quelqu'un à faire quelque chose dans une société civilisée. Mais on comprend ce qu'ils essayent de faire et on ne va pas s'opposer à ce point-là.

Deuxièmement, on a besoin de donner, puis je vois dans ce projet de loi qu'il essaie de s'adresser à ces questions, directement au staff des commissions scolaires la capacité financière pour accommoder les jeunes.

In the last couple of minutes I've got, I want to find out if my good friend Andrea wants four minutes on this.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): No, that's fine.

Mr. Bisson: No, she doesn't, so I'll do it for her in English because I know what she would say.

Just to say a couple of things very quickly for the record and for those who were watching and didn't get chance to pick up the translation, just to be clear, on the surface of this, I don't have a problem supporting a bill that assists kids when it comes to volunteering in their communities. No MPP, no politician wants to stand against that train. But I think a couple of things need to be said.

One is that I have great confidence in the youth of today. I know we sometimes hear people of our generation talk about kids, "Oh my God, they aren't like we were when we were kids." I'll tell you, I was a lot worse than any of you. I admit that freely. I grew up at a time when it was pretty wild and woolly at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. I have ultimate confidence in the generation of today. I think kids are probably more aware of what's around them than we were. I think socially they're probably much more progressive than we were, to a certain extent. I think they're much more serious than

we were. That's the thing that strikes me. When I was in grade 7 to grade 12, I'll tell you, I wasn't very serious at all. As a matter of fact, I was so unserious that I quit in grade 11 to go into the army because I thought that was a great adventure. I took off to serve my nation for couple of years in the Canadian armed forces.

My point is that back then, for whatever reason, we didn't take things as seriously as kids do today. I think partly it's the economy and partly it's that our values have changed somewhat. When I grew up, there was lots of employment. If you knocked at the door of one employer that gave you a job tomorrow, you could quit in the afternoon and get another high-paying job the next day. There were a lot of industrial jobs out there where you didn't need to have university and college to make a very good living. I think kids recognize today that it's not the same game any more. If you're going to succeed in this world, as far as having an income to be able to support yourself in the lifestyle you want as you get older, it's going to take post-secondary education. I think most kids understand that far more than we did. I've got ultimate confidence that the young generation of today is going to leave this world a better place than we left it. I want to put that on the record.

Number two, to recognize that kids—

Mr. Delaney: We left it better than our parents.

Mr. Bisson: We left it better than our parents, and they're going to leave it better than us. But our parents didn't do a bad job, either, I must say. Anyway, that's a whole other debate.

The other thing I want to say is that kids do volunteer already. We need to put that on the record because there are children across our society who, from very early ages until their high school days and after, are involved in all kinds of things. They're involved in sports groups and community groups, they volunteer at the soup kitchen, they volunteer at their churches and all over. I'm always aware, as all of you are, that every time I go to most events that have to do with things in our community, there are young people involved making things happen. I think we need to recognize that it already happens and this should not be seen as forced volunteerism. We should be looking at this as how we provide the tools to the high schools to give them the dollars and the support necessary to help young people make more choices about where they can volunteer. As we know, most of you who are in the school system, there are very limited opportunities for volunteerism in the current system, and we need to expand that in some way. If we were to do that, I think it would be a better thing.

Again, I want to put on the record that I'm not for forced volunteerism. I have a bit of a problem with that concept, and I think most of us do. But I'll take this as an enhancement of what we currently have. I look forward to the work at committee to make that happen.

On the last point, I'd just say that, at the end, whenever this bill does go to second reading, one of the issues that we really need to take a look at is to try to strengthen it in ways that guarantee the author of the bill gets what he wants in the end, and that is to make sure that the

government understands that this is going to take some bucks. You can't just pass a bill and not give our school boards the kind of support they need financially to make this happen. We need to make sure that our school boards are properly funded, that they have the staff necessary to do what has to be done under this bill. Allowing this bill to pass at third reading and be enacted and proclaimed without the school boards getting the financial support they need is, I think, a recipe for disaster. We need to be very clear about that as we go into committee hearings to make sure that that part of it is done.

1100

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Fonseca, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Fonseca: I want to thank all the members who spoke to Bill 19—the members for Mississauga West, Davenport, Nipissing, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, for Oak Ridges and for Timmins–James Bay—and how they provided the experiences that they're finding in their communities when it comes to volunteerism and when it comes to our youth. I have to reiterate what the member for Timmins–James Bay said: Our youth today are so resourceful. They are amazing. They are doing extraordinary things in all sectors of our community.

This piece of legislation is about making a program better. We're going to make it better by listening, really, not just to us here in this room. I want to thank all those students, all the youth, all the volunteer groups that were able to provide me so much input into how we can make it better. It was really about taking away barriers from the opportunity to volunteer.

I actually got an e-mail yesterday from a student, Carly Carrigan, from Cardinal Carter Catholic High School. She's taking part in the CBC series Making the Grade. I love this. She has said, "I looked directly at the bill, Mr. Fonseca, that you're trying to pass and I was wondering if we could work together to make it better, to make it the perfect bill." This is what it's all about. It's about making sure that we work with the students to provide that opportunity and make volunteerism habitual, to make it a positive thing that they're going to want to do for the rest of their lives.

I thank you very much for giving me the opportunity here to speak to this wonderful part of our community, which is volunteerism.

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT DE L'ENFANCE

Mr. Craitor moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Craitor, you have up to 10 minutes. You have the floor.

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): It's a great pleasure. I'd like to start out by introducing some special guests who have taken the time to be here with us this morning. In the gallery are Judy Cutler, Michelle Taylor-Fernandez and Bill Gleberzon of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, affectionately known as CARP. We also have Kyriacos Kyriacou of Grandparenting Again Canada and Sheila Volchert of Second Chance for Kids. In addition, we have at least 30 or more very special guests as well, and they are grandparents from all across Ontario who have taken the time to be here.

Grandparents' access and custodial rights is an issue that is not going to go away. There are some very human faces of people who care passionately for and love their grandchildren, but they have been denied visitation access or are currently raising grandchildren after experiencing a lot of difficulty establishing their rights before law. Far too often, as many of you in this House may know, in a messy divorce case, for example, access to children of the marriage has been used as a lethal weapon. Spite, hatred, revenge and anger can be an awful thing, but no child should be its weapon. Let me outline to you how I came to realize that far too often in this battleground, parents also lose access to their grandchildren.

When I was first elected, one of the first groups that came in to see me was a number of grandparents from my community. During that hour or hour and a half of our discussion, I realized the significance and problems that grandparents have. Thanks to their help and the help from grandparents across Ontario, we formulated and are bringing this bill forward. I also want to say that, unfortunately, somewhere along the line, when it comes to grandchildren, emotion clouds judgment as to what is in the best interests of the child.

Bill 8 will amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their grandparents. Specifically, the bill will require parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents. The proposed legislation contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child, including a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between the children and the grandparents. It also requires courts to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as consistent with the best interests of the child.

The legislation is commonly referred to as the grandparents' rights legislation. A modified form of my proposal has already been considered in the Yukon and in six other provinces, including Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

On its face, this is a very modest bill. It will cost the province nothing. The bill is simply about grandparental access and the nurturing development of their grandchildren; nothing more, nothing less. Grandparental access and visitation rights are a huge and growing problem. Boomers are now grandparents. They are articulate, concerned and committed. They have a voice and their voice needs to be heard.

I mentioned this situation when I introduced a bill about a year and a half ago. At that time, I was blown away by the number of phone calls, e-mails, letters, people visiting my office, describing pain and suffering that caring grandparents suffered as children's relationships broke down in high matrimonial conflict situations. After the introduction of the bill back then, my office received well over 2,000 contacts, again by mail, phone calls, e-mails or personal visits. Many of them came not only from Ontario, they came from across provinces in Canada, including the United States and even outside of that.

In many cases, the children were used as weapons, first in custody and then denied access to their grandparents. The relationship of a child to their grandparents can be a beautiful and self-affirming association. Not all these situations are caused only by divorce.

I was particularly taken by a case in my own riding of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Marie and Herb Lewis had written me a letter, and I will share that with you. I still remember reading the letter. I think I see it every other day in my mind—a very emotional situation. Their daughter had passed away far, far too young. The husband had remarried and, since then, has denied them access to their daughter's children. I agreed with them when they wrote me, "Nobody should have the right to deny the children the love they deserve."

I would like the House to also hear a couple of other e-mails, because that's the reality of the bill. It's about personal situations that grandparents are going through.

Here's one that I received about a month ago: "I am praying this bill passes. My son committed suicide and my daughter-in-law has become angry at him and our entire family. We live in Nova Scotia. She lives in Ontario. I have a grandson there looking just like my son who is gone. Please, please, give it your best effort and thank you from the bottom of our hearts."

Another e-mail: "Mr. Craitor, Bill 8 is not only for grandparents of children involved in separation or divorce. I'm a grandparent being denied access to my eight-year-old grandson by his parents as revenge for me not allowing them to bully me into giving them half of the ownership of my house. They lived with me for the first five years of my grandson's life. I was totally involved with them on a daily basis.

"This bill will allow me to fight for the right to see him. I miss him terribly. I know he misses me. Do you not think that this is harmful to him as a child that is involved with a separation or divorce. He lost his loving grandmother.

"Please continue and ask everyone to support this bill. Thank you."

I could go on. As I said, I think I have probably over 2,000 of these e-mails and personal stories that I could certainly share.

One last one that I want to share, and this came in just a couple of weeks ago from an individual. The letter says: "I lost my daughter in a car crash on March 19. She left behind a little girl who was 18 months old. We more or less raised our granddaughter as the father of the baby walked out on her when our granddaughter was three months old. Since the day of her birth, we've been extremely close with our granddaughter. After the incident, the father took her to live with him and wouldn't allow us to come and visit him. We would have to go to his parents' house to see her for a couple of hours. We finally had to go to court to gain access to her. Right now, after a lot of fight, we have access to our beautiful granddaughter every other weekend. Although we are quite happy, but we want more access. She is ours, all we have from our daughter, and we feel she should be with us rather than her paternal grandparents. When she is with us she is so happy, she doesn't want to go back. It really breaks our hearts to see her little sad face. We wish things could be different. We miss our daughter very much and it's really hard to get by day to day. We just wait for our weekend access to see our granddaughter. We thought that we would share this sad story with you, Mr. Craitor." Signed, "Judith."

1110

These letters, these voices, these people, give me and I think this House a real testimony to the problem that exists with grandparents' rights. I want to remind you that Bill 8 is simply about the best interests of the child. I am truly convinced that with a little prodding and encouragement, the courts and social agencies can provide real leadership in providing access to grandparents and love to their grandchildren.

I'm standing here simply to say to the House, to my colleagues, to my members, please support the reading of Bill 8. In doing so, this bill will continue and will go to public hearings. I think that will really give the public the opportunity to know and understand the passion and the pain that grandparents are facing.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 8. I think everybody in this House would agree, including the grandparents who are here today, that this bill is certainly about grandparents' rights but it's always about the best interests of our children.

Certainly in my life, and I know that's the case in many people's lives and many young people's lives, grandparents are very special people. They can be very special people when it comes to the quality of life of children. I have fond memories of my grandparents. Unfortunately, I've lost most of them, but I still have a grandma who is in a home right now. For the most part, all of my memories, going back to when I was a very young child, include my grandparents and the role they played in my life.

From my reading of it, this bill basically requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles between the personal relationships of children and their grandparents. It amends a subsection of the Children's Law Reform Act to reference the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents, and it requires consistency always with the best interests of the child. I think that's a very important piece. There are other specifics around what the bill is about, but let's talk about what grandparents are all about.

Who are grandparents? It's interesting to note the statistics on grandparents: 76% of people aged 65 and older are grandparents; 90% of those over 65 who have children themselves are grandparents; 40% of Canadians whose grandparents are alive see them at least once a month; 36% of women between the ages of 45 and 54, 42% of women from 55 to 64 and 22% of women 65 and older provide regular child care for their grandchildren. Maternal grandmothers were chosen by most grandchildren as their closest grandparent, followed by the paternal grandmother, then by the maternal and paternal grandfathers as their closest relative. Children are choosing their grandparents, are self-identifying that their grandparents are their closest relatives.

It's not surprising that children would identify with their grandparents as being their closest relatives, because grandparents have a unique role in a child's life. The parents are there day to day, dealing with the day-to-day stresses and the pressures of life within the family unit in all of its forms—sometimes one parent, sometimes both parents and, unfortunately, sometimes no parents. What grandparents do is provide this extra comfort zone, this extra place where children feel totally loved and totally supported. But it's not within the context of their own day-to-day family life; it's within the context of this broader kinship with grandparents.

Grandparents not only provide that safety zone, that place of love and warmth and total acceptance, but they also have a unique role in educating or raising awareness of family history in children. Grandparents are in the unique position to not only discuss with children cultural and ethnic values and traditions, but also the basic family history. Many times my grandmother told me stories about her mother and her grandmother or her father and her grandfather, so I got a sense of the history of my family as they lived in Ontario, even as they emigrated from another country. I know some of the businesses that they were involved in. In fact, to this day I can go into a certain area of our downtown in Hamilton and identify with a particular storefront where my family—my great-great-grandparents and maybe my great-great-great-grandparents—had a small business. They had the first soda fountain ever in the city of Hamilton at the turn of the century. They were chocolatiers and they were quite famous for their provision of sweets to the community of Hamilton. But I wouldn't know that if it wasn't for my grandmother having told me those stories, and my grandmother having collected a pictorial history of that

point in time. I actually have some photos that date back quite some time ago, indicating the businesses that my various family members were involved with. Also, you get a chance to hear about things like, "You have so-and-so's ears. You have so-and-so's eyes. Your great-uncle or your great-great-aunt had the same personality as you have." These are all stories that continue to maintain the connection between children and their grandparents.

Grandparents also, as I mentioned at the very beginning, act in so many other ways as a support system for the rest of the family, but particularly for the children. So when mom and dad are needing some time away, it's usually grandparents who are turned to. When children need or just want to have some time out of the regular family routine, grandparents are relied upon for that. Grandparents often are in a role of providing some safe space for kids if things are getting tense around the house. I know I used to go to my grandparents when my parents were doing their Christmas shopping, and of course it's getting to be around that time now.

The point is that there are so many different roles that grandparents play in a child's life. It's sometimes on a regular basis in terms of formal babysitting and those kinds of arrangements, and sometimes it's an informal, spur-of-the-moment type of relationship. The problem, of course, arises when, unfortunately, for one reason or another, grandparents are prevented from keeping those relationships or maintaining those relationships or are being prevented from even seeing their grandchildren. It's an issue that's of great and rising concern, not only for grandparents but for grandchildren and for broader communities. The unfortunate reality is that sometimes decisions get made and as a result of those decisions, the grandparents are cut out of that relationship and everybody suffers. The children suffer because they lose that connection and the grandparents suffer. I think the presenter of the bill did an excellent job in describing some of those very difficult, unfortunate and frankly nasty situations that occur when grandparents are cut out of the situation when it comes to their grandchildren.

I have to say that when I initially looked at the bill, the first thing that came to mind was, well, gee, I certainly support grandparents and their rights, but we have to make sure that it's in the best interests of children. When I read the bill, I was really pleased to see that that piece is in there, because just as we talk about children being hurt in divorce situations and used as pawns and those kinds of things, we have to make sure that's not what is happening here. It certainly is my belief, anyway, from what I read, that the intention of the bill is to make sure that children's best interests are kept at the forefront.

1120

You know, it's interesting, because the government has another bill that is currently going through the process. It's Bill 210, a bill that basically looks at crown wards and tries to figure out how to make sure more crown wards can be successfully adopted. There are a number of pieces in it. Interestingly enough, one of the pieces in that bill—and I brought a little primer about it

here—includes grandparents. It includes the idea that grandparents have a role to play when a child is taken into custody by the state. It's interesting, because that role is identified in all stages of the process, so that when the necessity is identified for a child to be taken into the care of the state because of problems in their home life, it's a requirement for agencies, for CASSs, to identify who might be able to be involved in the care of that child, not only through the investigative process, but also should the decision be made that they have to be removed from the home. I thought it was very interesting that grandparents are part of that kinship group that are going to be looked to under this new legislation once it gets through the process and get passed. But again, in that bill, Bill 210, the interesting piece that I found as well is it's consistent with the thought that's in this bill, which is that it is always thought to be with the best interests of the child or the children at heart. While we're making sure that we're doing the right thing by grandparents in regard to this bill, we're also making sure that the motivation to do that is the motivation of our children, and to make sure that they have the opportunity to have those relationships and to have those valuable times with their grandparents.

I thought I should raise that, because in some ways Bill 210 was a bit of an eye-opener, and the process likely of putting that together was something where people began to acknowledge, at least in this place, that this is really valuable, really important, and that we should be trying to do as much as we can to make sure that grandparents are acknowledged as an important part of children's lives in their own right within that relationship that exists. Regardless of what's happening in the actual parental zone, that grandparent zone is a zone that we have to be able to support, and we have to be able to make sure that they have some decent rights of access to their grandchildren.

I guess there are a number of different ways that those relationships break down with parents, whether it's a difficulty between the parents of children and their parents, whether it's a breakup of a marriage or a relationship, whether it's a death in the family or some of the other situations that the sponsor of the bill described in his remarks. But the bottom line in each of those cases is there are things that we need to make sure we're doing in the process of taking on that responsibility of giving grandparents the opportunity to stay connected with their grandchildren. Those things are very specific around making sure that there are no other issues out there that we need to be worried about. Again, I certainly don't want to dwell on that, but when we're dealing with situations of family violence, when we're dealing with situations of women abuse, when we're dealing with situations of violence against children or child abuse, we have to be extremely careful that the interests of the abused mother, for example, or the child are taken into consideration, because we wouldn't want to have a situation where we're reducing the support that we're giving to abused women and removing their ability to pull their

lives together and make a good home and good life for their children. If we're interfering in their right or ability to do that, then I think we have to back away. That isn't to say that at some point in time those issues cannot be resolved, but when there's an initial concern about violence in the household, then we really have to make sure that we're not doing anything to make it more difficult for a woman to be able to find a safe place and safe home for her and her children.

Having said that, again I do want to say that this bill is likely the beginning—the thin edge of the wedge, if you want to call it that. It's an initial start in trying to address some of these problems, some of these issues. I don't think it's the be-all and end-all in terms of where we need to go. Quite frankly, the person who brings the bill, the sponsor of the bill, Mr. Craitor, is acknowledging that full out. But the point is, it's a start. Combined with some of the acknowledgement of grandparents in other legislation and with this piece here today, with the acknowledgement and recognition that it's the best interests of our children that are at our heart—I certainly know, for all of the grandparents that I have spoken to and that I deal with and for my own grandparents, that's always their motivation: the best interests of the children. But we have to always ensure that that is our first level of responsibility, our first level of acknowledgement of who it is that we're trying to do well for or do right by: the grandchildren. In so doing, in ensuring that they have those relationships with their grandparents, we end up doing the right thing all the way around.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to—

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I apologize to my colleague—

Mr. Tascona: My time's being used, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order?

Mr. Fonseca: The galleries are full today with a group from Wexford Public School. I just wanted to acknowledge them. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr. Tascona: He shouldn't be doing that when the clock starts, Mr. Speaker. I should have my time put back.

I'd just like to say that this is a serious issue that demands serious debate. It's unfortunate that the member from Niagara Falls had to come forth with what I would say is a piecemeal approach to reforming the Family Law Act and the Children's Law Reform Act, which cries out for overhaul. It has been over 20 years since the Family Law Act was enacted, and the Children's Law Reform Act needs to be changed based on the case law that's out there; it needs to be changed with respect to the changing nature of family relationships today. It's up to the Attorney General and the Minister for Children and Youth Services to start to do something. We cannot have a member come forth here, a private member's all best intentions, on a very narrow issue which deserves to be

considered, to be left away from total reform of the Family Law Act and total reform of the Children's Law Reform Act.

I think I studied the initial Family Law Reform Act when I was in law school back at Queen's over 20 years ago. Nothing has changed; there have been no major and significant amendments to this piece of legislation. It cries out for change because of what we're talking about here today.

Anyone who has practised family law knows that it's emotional. They know that it's litigious. They know that there are serious issues with respect to family breakdown, serious issues with respect to the distribution of assets, serious issues with respect to the support of the family, and also the critical issues of custody and access of the parents or the grandparents. That's something that has not been dealt with. We have case law that has been emerging, we have reality in terms of family relationships today, and yet we have nothing in terms of major reform of the Family Law Reform Act and the Children's Law Reform Act.

I would put it out to the ministers today—the Attorney General and the children and youth services minister—to listen to their member in terms of starting an approach. This is a narrow amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act. It's an important amendment, but the overhaul is necessary.

1130

I want to refer to the Canadian Family Law Quarterly, volume 21, 2003. It's an article by Martha Shaffer, entitled, "To Grandmother's House We Go? An Examination of Grandparent Access." In this particular article, she looks at a number of general trends and principles in Canadian case law:

"An examination of the case law on grandparent access gives rise to four general observations. First, despite the widely held belief that grandparent access is a problem of divorce, many of the litigated grandparent access cases were not precipitated by marriage breakdown....

"Second, two main approaches to grandparent claims are discernible in the case law. Not surprisingly, these approaches mirror the two competing background assumptions that can inform the best interests standard in grandparent access cases. The dominant approach embraces as its background norm the assumption that contact with grandparents is generally in the child's best interests." It's called the pro-contact approach.

There is a minority view, an opposing view, the parental autonomy approach, which "recently received a forceful endorsement by the Ontario Court of Appeal in the case of *Chapman v. Chapman*. Despite initial predictions that *Chapman*, as an appellate decision, would change the pro-contact orientation of Canadian courts, courts continue to make grandparent access orders in a large number of cases. Even more significantly, the 'pro-contact' strand of analysis remains strong in the post-*Chapman* case law.

"Third, as a result of this pro-contact orientation, courts tend to order access to grandparents unless the

parents have what the courts view as good reasons for ending the relationship....

"Finally, where grandparents succeed in obtaining access, courts are careful to confine its scope. Typically, courts grant access one weekend day every three to six weeks for a period of several hours."

So the leading decision with respect to grandparent access is the case of *Chapman versus Chapman*, which supports the parental autonomy approach. I'll just read you some facts of this case:

"Larry and Monica Chapman, not Esther Chapman, are responsible for the welfare of the children. They alone have this legal duty. Esther Chapman, as a grandparent, loves her grandchildren and, understandably, wants to maintain contact with them. Nonetheless, the right to decide the extent and nature of the contact is not hers, and neither she nor a court should be permitted to impose their perception of the children's best interests in circumstances such as these where the parents are so demonstrably attentive to the needs of their children. The parents have, for the moment, decided that those needs do not include lengthy, frequent visits with their grandmother. Although the parents' conflict with Esther Chapman is unfortunate, there is no evidence that this parental decision is currently detrimental to the children. It should therefore be respected by the court and the children's best interests left in the exclusive care of their parents."

Martha Shaffer goes on to conclude in her article, "I conclude by arguing that the case law on grandparent access offers important insights for future development of the law, either by the judiciary or at the level of legislative reform. The case law establishes that parents often deny access or seek to restrict it for legitimate reasons. Where family relations have reached the point that grandparents are prepared to go to court to force access and parents are prepared to go to court to prevent it, access may not be in the best interests of the child. For these reasons, courts should be cautious to ensure that they do not make access orders too readily. Legislatures should refrain from creating statutory presumptions of grandparent access, as these provisions are likely to do more harm than good in repairing fractured family relationships."

That's an article that was presented in the Canadian Family Law Quarterly in 2003, after the *Chapman versus Chapman* decision in the Ontario Court of Appeal. What the member is trying to accomplish here is no doubt a presumption in favour of grandparent access over the approach of parental autonomy, which the courts currently support.

It's a very short bill, and the provisions are very pointed. Subsection 1(2.1) says that parents and others with custody of children are to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relationships between the children and their grandparents. That sounds nice, but I'll speak as a lawyer: Looking at that, what's the remedy for the grandparent, and what is the impact on the family relationship in a situation where the parents do not want

access for the grandparents to their child? That's what the author was talking about. Is that in the best interests of the child to go into a litigious situation, in terms of examining the relationship with the child? I have to speak frankly: I don't think it's in the best interests to have child access and custody be a litigious matter 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It's not in the best interests of the child.

The other part of it is subsections 2(2.1) and (2.2), where, in this approach, the court is to look with respect to the best interests of the child. That is the law; that is the way it is. But I think the member from Niagara Falls is correct: We need hearings on this matter because we're going to hear some different sides. We need to hear from the legal experts and we need to hear some family law experts in terms of dealing with family relationships.

I commend the member for bringing forth this particular piece of legislation, but I also look at the government to say: Get on with it. Let's start looking at major changes, significant changes, to the Family Law Act and Children's Law Reform Act. I don't want to hear from the other side, coming back and saying, "Why didn't you do it?" We're here today to try to deal with something. The member from Niagara Falls—

Interjection.

Mr. Tascona: I don't want to hear from the member from North Bay, because she has nothing to say on this.

I want to say something: We're dealing with a particular piece of legislation that is a piecemeal reform in terms of a situation where it requires a major overhaul of the Family Law Act and the Children's Law Reform Act because the case law begs it and the relationships today in 2005 require it.

Those are the comments I have to make. I look forward to public hearings on this particular piece of legislation. Unfortunately, because it was brought by a private member, the chances of this going forth probably aren't very good, but if we can get the Minister of Children and Youth Services and the Attorney General to start looking at major reform in these areas, we might see something happen.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm very pleased to get up today to support the member for Niagara Falls', Kim Craitor's, Bill 8, a bill that emphasizes the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents and requires parents with custody of children to not place obstacles or get in the way of the potential relationship between a young person and their grandparents.

Why is this important? Well, the relationship or bond between a child and a grandparent can be invaluable in the development of that child. It's not irreplaceable—there are a number of young people who grow up without seeing their grandparents—but it can certainly be an invaluable contribution to the development of that person.

I know Mr. Craitor feels passionately about this, and he shared with us a number of stories that people have exchanged with him. It was very touching, hearing a lot

of those stories. But I thought, upon hearing Mr. Craitor's passion for this, that he must be a grandparent himself, having experienced that bond with a grandchild, although he looks far too young to be a grandfather, of course. I asked him—he's my seatmate—the other day, "Are you a grandparent already?" And he said no. But his comments led me to believe that he's a wannabe grandparent. I'm hoping he sends this Hansard to his daughter Colleen and his son Chris, because he told me that he really wants them to get on with it so that he can experience that great bond with grandchildren. I know his wife, Helen, probably feels the same.

You make sure you send that to your young people. I'm doing my bit to help you out.

1140

Mr. Craitor also shared with us a lot of empirical evidence of the importance, in terms of child development, of that relationship between a grandparent and grandchild. A lot of it leads to self-esteem. The empirical evidence suggests—in fact, probably proves—that having a grandparent actively involved in the life of a child really does boost a young person's self-esteem. When we look at some of the problems going on in our urban areas, and particularly here in the Toronto area over the last little while, if there were ways we could expand the impact of grandparents and that grandparent relationship with some of the young people who are experiencing problems, I can't help but think that perhaps we could have prevented some of the problems we're experiencing today with a very small portion of our young people, but a portion that's having a very significant impact in our communities. I can't help but think that that higher level of self-esteem that a grandparent brings—because it's unconditional love, quite often, that a grandparent brings to a child. It's that pressure-free love that I think really gives a young person that feeling of confidence to go on and do whatever it is they want to do with their lives.

I can tell you today that it's not only empirical evidence but personal experience of the relationships that I was privileged to have with my grandparents. I had a grandmother who had six kids that she had to bring up in pretty much abject poverty, both in the Ottawa and Toronto areas. I remember the relationship I had with her. I remember seeing her trying to read the paper day in and day out. She was Ukrainian and she would spend hours trying to read the paper. It led me to believe how important literacy is, because she would read that paper day in and day out, but she could barely get through it.

I remember my grandparents on my father's side. My grandmother was an immigrant from Ireland, and my grandfather—his father had come over from Scotland. I remember the things they taught me, the value of standing up for yourself, the value of being kind to others, the value—and I'll never forget this. There was a school group here from Wexford Public School that I spoke with earlier. I told them that when I was a kid, I was shy, and it wasn't until my grandfather told me—

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): You were shy?

Mr. Duguid: I was really shy; a very shy kid. I really was. My grandfather told me that when he was younger, he was shy too. My father told me he was shy when he was younger. My grandfather said, "If there was anything I could change about myself, it would be that I wouldn't be shy." I said, "Well, my grandfathers were shy. My father was shy. I can't follow in those footsteps. I've got to change," and so I drove myself to be much more outgoing. Lo and behold, here I am speaking to a bunch of people in the Legislature, which I think my grandfather probably would have been terrified to do. But it just goes to show that that relationship with your grandparents can change a child's life, can have a big impact on where they go in the future.

Mr. Craitor, I thank you for bringing this forward on behalf of all of us.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I rise to speak to the bill, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act, put forward by Mr. Craitor.

The member was just speaking about not being a grandparent yet, but in fact I became a grandparent twice this past summer for the first time. I also want to go on and say that I have not seen my grandparents since I was six years old. It was because our family moved to a different country and the grandparents obviously didn't. So it's a very important thing to me, but I guess I'm the effects of not having grandparents as opposed to the effects of having grandparents.

Again, speaking to the issue of being shy, I have also been trying to avoid following in my father's footsteps. I have 14 brothers and sisters. I'm trying to avoid that, and I only have four children.

I want to say that I do support the bill. I think what the bill is trying to do is ask the courts to give effect to the principle that the child's interest is foremost, both in whom the custodial parent should be and the access for grandparents. I think it's very important. The key words are "in the best interests of the child." We have to guarantee that decisions made are in fact in the best interests of the child.

Again, it's not that I want to be negative to the bill, but I want to read a section of a letter I received from a parent who wants us to understand a different side of the situation. She starts out by saying that she and her husband are a loving, committed couple who have been married for seven years and have two children aged three and five. She also says that dealing with her husband's parents has been an ongoing battle throughout their courtship and marriage. Christmas of 2003 was the last time they saw his parents. She wrote, "The visit didn't go well from the beginning. My father-in-law was very disrespectful toward my husband. He was demeaning and rude. My daughter was three at the time and that was an impressionable age—old enough to see and hear the tension and the anger, old enough to see the way her grandparents treat her father and mother. My children never willingly kiss or hug or interact with their paternal grandparents. Everything is forced. When we left their house, my mother-in-law threatened to take away all of

her presents if she did not kiss her grandfather. This is what they do—threaten to get their way."

Well, without reading the whole letter, it came down to the daughter-in-law letting her husband's parents know that they wanted to be treated with respect. Instead of sitting down and talking to each other, her in-laws went to court and filed papers to gain access to the children; this started an eight-month court battle. The battle was a bitter one. The grandparents eventually dropped the case but continue to threaten to go back to court when they want to get their way.

In her letter, the mother states, "From what I have read about Bill 8, it seems like it is just for situations like a divorce or a death of a parent, but it still concerns me. It concerns me that one day my in-laws may have a chance to gain access to my children. They have told us more than once that they would take us back to court, and if this bill gets passed, I have no doubt that they will. The part that worries me the most is, 'A person who has custody of a child shall not unreasonably place obstacles to personal relations between the child and the child's grandparents.'"

The mother states that the grandparents and extended families do not have the right to be part of children's lives; it is a privilege. I have to agree with her point. In fact, in Oxford they offer a unique program that is aimed at helping guide grandparents in their role as new grandparents. The program, entitled the Joy of Grandparenting, is being offered by the Oxford County Board of Health to teach grandparents to be grandparents. The two-hour session explores a number of interesting issues. They say—and I have to admit being guilty of this myself—that grandparents often can't stop giving advice. It was also mentioned that it's hard to let go. We sometimes forget there is a lot of value in a support role and just loving your grandchildren unconditionally is a great opportunity.

Thank you very much for this opportunity, and I want to say that I don't know what I would do if the courts said that I would no longer have visiting rights to the two grandchildren I presently have.

Mr. Delaney: It's a real pleasure to stand in support of Bill 8, put forth by my seatmate and good friend the member for Niagara Falls, with whom I've been joined at the elbow since my election.

Today's grandparents are strong and healthy people. Today's grandparents look more like their parents did a generation or two ago than their grandparents of the post-war era. Our lifespans are longer. Today we look at the decade of our 60s and beyond with anticipation, and we don't look upon them as our declining years. That brings us to Bill 8, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act. Bill 8 is very simple. Bill 8 merely requires the courts not to dismiss an application by a willing grandparent to assume custody or to retain access to a child when doing so is in the best interests of the child.

Bill 8 deals with cases that many of us would rather not spend too much time thinking about: the breakup of a marriage, conflict within a family, the death or disability of one or both parents. Bill 8 deals with these often tragic

cases where the courts need to make a decision on who will assume custody of a child. Bill 8 asks, when a court needs to consider the best interests of a child or children, that willing grandparents not be denied custody of the children, nor be denied reasonable access to them.

Bill 8 asks courts to consider the interests of the grandparents who are willing and able to assume custody of their grandchildren should tragedy strike their children's family. Let's look at why that would be a good idea. Our government is in the process of ending mandatory retirement. We recognize that we have a shortage of people in their child-rearing years. If we can't find them on the job, then how do we expect to find them in family settings to be foster parents or guardians? While Ontario looks to immigration to fill our ranks in the trades and professions, it also encourages people in their prime career years to work, if they choose to. So let us extend that same philosophy to custody of children. These days, grandma and grandpa are as likely to be a working couple as are mom and dad. Moreover, when it comes to raising a child, grandma and grandpa have done the job of child-rearing; not only have they done it, but they have the maturity and perspective of experience and age to enable them to enjoy child-rearing in their mature years in a way they may not have been able to a generation earlier.

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As a personal example, a number of years ago, when I lived on Trondheim Crescent in Meadowvale in northern Mississauga, our street had a large number of young children, all about the same age. For a few years I went with the kids to Canada's Wonderland, taught them hide and seek, played ball hockey, went to birthday parties and generally served as a big brother to all of our street's kids. I found the experience to be unexpectedly wonderful. I got to see my own teenage years in a whole new way and I lived them a second time around when I played with the kids, who today are all young adults.

Let it be the same with grandparent access to children. Our grandparents have the willingness, the energy, the health and the capacity to share time with their grandchildren, and when necessary to substitute for the parents of the child, to assume custody and to raise the grandchildren in a caring and loving environment.

Bill 8 says to the courts that they may not dismiss the rights and willingness of grandchildren in child custody or access cases. If courts must be blind to religion, to ethnic origin and to gender in considering the well-being of a child, let courts be similarly blind in their consideration of the age of a grandparent who is willing and able to raise grandchildren as their own.

I think this is a good bill. I'm supporting it. I encourage all members to support it. I think this adds to our Ontario fabric the type of fairness we're bringing to the workplace and the type of attitude we expect in schools. I think this is a bill we're going to look back on and be proud of in years hence.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I'm pleased to speak in support of Bill 8, raised by my colleague the

MPP for Niagara Falls. We all know that children need stability, that children need feelings of self-worth, and that it's vital to help children form meaningful, long-term relationships. I'm going to use my short time here this morning to talk about a meaningful relationship that occurred in my life, and about grandparents who affected my life and those of my children. I wish to recognize the role my grandparents, Rose and Frank Gray, played not only in my upbringing but in that of one of my children.

Nineteen years ago I gave birth to a son who was special needs. I know grandparents always want to check that they have children with 10 fingers and 10 toes, but sometimes children come in different kinds of packages. I had grandparents who saw a child who was special needs at the time, but I had a grandmother who didn't believe he was special needs. She would never accept that and believed in him having untapped potential that no one else could see. She was a wonderful person who listened when I needed to talk, held her tongue when she probably should have stepped in and said something to me, and was a wonderful sounding board and a steadying influence in my life and my son's. They loved unconditionally, and I think that's the most special thing about grandparents. They listened when I needed to talk. I guess they were the best encouragement I could find in my life and in my son's life.

Without the strong support, children, youth, are vulnerable to other risks. We know that they can make wrong decisions without grandparents as a steadying influence. They are a valuable resource, an untapped resource, and I support maintaining the ties between children and their grandparents. I support Bill 8.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I would like to thank my colleagues for allowing me to share the time this morning. I would like to congratulate the member for Oxford on becoming a grandpa, because it is such an important time in his life and such a great relationship. I also want to congratulate the member for Niagara Falls for bringing this forward today. It is an important discussion to have, and I support him in this legislation and in ensuring that grandparents have a role in their grandchildren's lives.

I know that the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford didn't want to acknowledge that in eight years his government took no action, but I will acknowledge that they didn't. I also note that the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, speaking as a lawyer, had some concern about this legislation. I too am a lawyer. I noted that in the drafting of this legislation we did reference, on a number of occasions, "the best interests of the child," and of course that is fundamental to family law and to custody issues and to access issues. Again, the member for Niagara Falls has taken great care to ensure that the best interests of the child are foremost in this piece of legislation.

I want to take just a brief moment to speak about some great grandparent relationships that I had in my life. My grandfather, Cyril P. Smith, was a pharmacist in North Bay. He was the only grandparent I knew. My other three grandparents had passed away before I was born. He was

in his 80s when I was conscious of him. He was a vital, active senior who took great interest in his grandchildren. We had the privilege and fortune of growing up two blocks away so we would always head down to Papa's house with our report cards and were given treats because we did well. He provided a great deal of support and nurturing to me and my three brothers. We were the last generation of grandchildren for him, as my cousins were quite a bit older. But he never spared a moment of time or energy or interest in our lives. He was always there to hear our stories and to be supportive.

My mom has recently become a grandma and was very delighted. As Mr. Duguid pointed out, there was much pressure put to bear on becoming a grandparent, and now she has two granddaughters. She's an active grandma who will jump on a plane at the drop of a hat to look after those grand-girls, and is having a delightful time with them. I see that bond and the importance of that relationship, and actually can't even fathom putting a halt to that relationship, to the joy that the girls bring to Grandmama and to the extent that Grandmama has an impact and contributes to their lives. I think it really is an important familial relationship that we cannot underplay.

I want to congratulate the member for Niagara for bringing this forward, for recognizing the importance that grandparents play in so many lives. In my work in long-term care, I see homes where they're providing a play area for the children so that those grandchildren can visit their grandparents, and that's so important.

I want to commend the member for Niagara Falls. I support Bill 8, and I want to thank the other members for their great comments today.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Craitor, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Craitor: First, I want to thank all the members who have spoken on this bill: the members from Mississauga West, Scarborough Centre, Brampton Centre, Hamilton East, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Durham and Nipissing. It's quite interesting listening to their remarks in support of the bill, but also to the stories they share about their grandparents and the influence that those grandparents had on their lives.

I often say to my friends back home that I'm pretty lucky to be a provincial member of Parliament. I think we all are. I take it seriously, like everyone else in this House. But I guess today is one of those days that you're pretty proud—even more so, I'm pretty proud of all of the grandparents who have gone out of their way to be here today. I'm proud of all of the organizations that have helped me along the way. I thank all of the people who shared their personal stories with me, probably stories that they may not share with other people but they realize it's an important bill. By sharing it with me they probably helped to motivate me even further than what I might have done to take this bill forward.

It is a modest bill, but when you hear the stories and the situations, it's a bill about people's lives; it's a bill about their grandchildren. Today, it is one step forward. I

heard some comments about, "It's a private member's bill," and, "What are the chances?" I never think that way. I'm a very positive person. I've supported some of my colleagues in opposition on some of their bills because I think they're great bills, and I'm prepared to go forward as far as I can to make them a success. I think that's what will happen with this bill.

I thank everyone for their comments and look forward to the passing of this bill, and will go forward with it.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you to all members. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (PARTICIPATION COMMUNAUTAIRE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall deal first with ballot item number 9.

Mr. Fonseca has moved second reading of Bill 19.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members after we've dealt with the next item. We will now deal with ballot item number 10.

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT DE L'ENFANCE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Craitor has moved second reading of Bill 8.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will vote on this one as well. Call in the members. I remind you, it's a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Members take their seats, please. Mr. Kormos, you have to take your seat. Is Mr. Kormos in the House? Then Mr. Kormos must take his seat.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: It's my understanding that the member for Niagara Centre is in the House. I'm warning the member for Niagara Centre that I will name him if he does not take his seat.

I'm naming the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos was escorted from the chamber.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT
(COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT), 2005

LOI DE 2005
MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION
(PARTICIPATION COMMUNAUTAIRE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Fonseca has moved second reading of Bill 19. All those in favour will please stand.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gerretsen, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Arthurs, Wayne	Hardeman, Ernie	Prue, Michael
Baird, John R.	Hoy, Pat	Qadri, Shafiq
Bisson, Gilles	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Scott, Laurie
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Tascona, Joseph N.
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Yakabuski, John
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mitchell, Carol	
Fonseca, Peter	Mossop, Jennifer F.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 34; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill is—

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): Mr Speaker, I ask that the bill be sent to the standing committee on social policy.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Fonseca has asked unanimous consent that the bill be sent to the standing committee on social policy. Agreed? No.

All those in favour will please stand. The majority is in favour. It will be sent to the standing committee on social policy.

The doors will now be opened for 30 seconds before the next vote.

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM
AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI
PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT
DE L'ENFANCE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Craitor has moved second reading of Bill 8. All those in favour will please stand.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gerretsen, John	Mitchell, Carol
Arthurs, Wayne	Hardeman, Ernie	Mossop, Jennifer F.
Baird, John R.	Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bisson, Gilles	Hoy, Pat	Qadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Scott, Laurie
Craitor, Kim	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Tascona, Joseph N.
Duguid, Brad	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	McNeely, Phil	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 36; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
Pursuant to standing order—

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to refer the bill to the standing committee on social policy.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Craitor has asked unanimous consent that the bill be sent to the standing committee on social policy. Agreed? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, this House will adjourn until 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1214 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): Each year, our farmers in Ontario rely on 14,000 migrant workers—excellent workers from countries like Jamaica and Mexico—as well as local seasonal help to plant and harvest crops. This requires lodging—bunkhouses—to provide a home away from home. Now the McGuinty government has ruled that bunkhouses should be taxed at the same rate as residential properties, and MPAC has just confirmed this.

For years, farm-worker bunkhouses have been taxed like other farm buildings. I lived in one 30 years ago when I primed tobacco. Taxes, rightfully so, have been based on the assessed value of the bunkhouse multiplied by one quarter of the residential rate. Typically, in my riding that's \$100 a year in taxes. With this week's ruling it quadruples to \$400.

Assessment complaints to date, as we all know, have launched an investigation of MPAC by Ontario's Ombudsman.

Only a government that doesn't understand or care about the plight of our fruit and vegetable or tobacco farmers and our farm economies would permit this to happen. Assessment tax hikes are the last straw for farmers already struggling with weather, low commodity prices, loss of markets and skyrocketing energy and other input costs. First maple syrup, then trailer parks, then horse farms, now—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

HIGHWAY 101

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Members may know that we've had a couple of tragic accidents on Highway 101 through the city of Timmons over the last month or so. We've now had a couple of fatalities, where people were involved in accidents from transport trucks coming through the community, specifically from the lumber industry.

You will know, Minister of Transportation, that earlier this week articles appeared in a local paper calling on the

provincial government and the municipality to look at finally fixing what is called a perimeter road passage around the city of Timmins. You would also know that the perimeter road was started some time ago. A second river crossing on the Mattagami River was part of that initiative. There is also the initiative that connected Shirley Street with Airport Road, which is part of the second phase of the project. The city, at one point, is going to be coming before this Minister of Transportation asking for the rest of the money necessary to finish the perimeter road from one end of Highway 101 to the other side of South Porcupine.

I want to lend my support to that, because I think in the end we need to take a look at how to reduce truck traffic on Highway 101 cutting through the city of Timmins, so that we can make it safer for both the motoring public and those who walk along Algonquin Boulevard. I expect to see something from the city of Timmins soon.

CHINESE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I wish to report on my recent trip to China. I was invited by the Chinese government. While in China, I was pleased to hear of the Chinese business community's satisfaction with the economic investment climate in Ontario. They were pleased to hear that the McGuinty government is committed to publicly funded services such as health care and education. They also praised the billions of additional dollars the McGuinty government has added to these publicly funded services since assuming office, and how this investment has ensured continued strength and growth in Ontario's economic performance.

The members of the Chinese business community were especially impressed by the McGuinty government's ability to manage the province's finances by having a deficit even lower than was originally forecast.

I came away from China with an understanding that the Chinese business community places great importance on investment in people. They told me that the government of Ontario is on the right track by focusing on people, because people are the key to attracting investment. I believe we are on the right path to a prosperous future because we recognize people as the province's most valuable resource.

I invite all the honourable members of this House to visit China whenever they decide to go outside of Ontario. Not only is it a beautiful nation to visit but it's also where the future of economic prosperity in the world is going to be.

LAYOFFS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): The recent announcement of the General Motors job losses in Oshawa will have an impact on the economy of the local community. It will affect not only those who will lose their jobs but also those who are involved in the related parts and service industries.

These cuts will affect an area much wider than Oshawa and Durham regions. General Motors is the largest employer of the people in my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock. Job losses, whether through layoffs or attrition, will have an impact throughout my riding and other surrounding areas. The Premier has called this loss of jobs a "contraction," but locally the impact is more than just numbers; it is going to affect people's lives. These job losses will have an impact on local businesses that have depended on General Motors as a customer. It will also impact on those businesses that have depended on General Motors employees as their customers.

Many businesses in my riding have been having a hard time coping with fewer customers because of the agricultural crisis that has hit our farming families. Farmers have not had money to spend in local stores. They've barely had money to make ends meet in a lot of cases. Now, with the announced closures by General Motors, these businesses will also lose many of these people as customers. Combine that with increased costs like electricity and it puts many of these businesses in danger of failing.

The McGuinty Liberals on the other side of this House need to understand that everything is interconnected and those economic contractions are more than just numbers. Every job loss is more than a number. Job losses affect people, their families and their communities.

CHRISTOPHER BART

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On November 16, I had the pleasure of attending the 2005 Outstanding Business Achievement Awards hosted by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. As the past president of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, I was pleased to join the Hamilton team and current president, Brian Wilson, to attend the awards.

I'd like to take this time to recognize one of the proud winners of the evening, an esteemed academic and the husband of Judy Rosen, one of my colleagues, Dr. Christopher Bart of McMaster University, who took home the corporate governance award for his work in establishing an innovative new program at McMaster's Directors College.

The college offers a comprehensive professional development certification program for corporate directors. Dr. Bart is the founder, principal and lead professor of Canada's first and only university-accredited program created specifically for the development and training of corporate directors. His goal is to increase awareness of the need for the certification and professionalization of corporate directors. Dr. Bart created this institution after dedicating his entire career to the study of corporate governance. His innovative ideas, combined with his dedication and hard work, led to his success.

I'd like to take this time to congratulate Dr. Bart, McMaster University and the DeGroote School of Business on the receipt of this well-deserved award.

MINISTER OF EDUCATION

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): The Minister of Education continues his campaign of political spin over substance. On November 1 and 2, the minister was asked to provide specific information to the standing committee on estimates relating to the number of suspensions, expulsions and exclusions which took place under the authority of the Education Act and the Safe Schools Act. He was asked those questions because he had repeatedly refused to acknowledge to parents who appealed to his office that indeed a serious problem exists in some schools where special-needs students are being expelled from school. They and their parents are left with no resources or supports and they have nowhere to turn for help. Essentially, the education system is failing these children and their families.

Even under direct questioning on this issue during committee hearings, the minister either could not or would not acknowledge that a problem exists. That was the reason for my specific questions and the request to have answers tabled with the committee. By refusing to provide specific information directly to the standing committee on estimates as requested and choosing instead to spin the information out through a press conference yesterday, this minister has not only demonstrated a lack of respect for members of that committee, but I submit that in every practical sense he is in contempt of Parliament.

I call on the minister to stop this practice of political spinning and to take his responsibility seriously. Be willing to get informed and have the courage to demand accountability in your ministry and in school boards across this province.

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SAULT AREA HOSPITAL

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation on behalf of the citizens of Sault Ste. Marie to Premier McGuinty and Ministers Smitherman and Caplan for their support of a new state-of-the-art hospital in Sault Ste. Marie. After years of previous governments' foot-dragging on the Sault Area Hospital project, we are finally moving forward through our \$30-billion ReNew Ontario infrastructure program.

On August 18, 2005, Premier McGuinty was in Sault Ste. Marie, on the site of the approved hospital, to announce that our government would provide 70% of the construction costs for the new facility, including a much-needed radiation therapy bunker. The Sault Area Hospital will contain 289 beds, the same number as the two current hospitals combined, with improved space for emergency, surgery and mental health services. The total square footage for the department space is 34% more than both existing hospitals combined. This is great news for the residents of Sault Ste. Marie and area, and I know our local communities are excited about this project.

While the NDP and a few special interest groups spread fear and mislead Ontarians about the AFP process, claiming hospitals will be privately owned, we know this is not true. Capital projects completed on our watch will be publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable. They will not be Conservative P3s, which allowed for private ownership.

The record is clear. The NDP spent their time cutting the number of doctors in Ontario and ignoring decaying infrastructure, while the Conservatives attempted to privatize the few hospitals they built. We are getting on with the real work at hand with a massive reinvestment in our hospitals, schools and transportation—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

TELEPERFORMANCE CANADA

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): The member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey has made much of the numerous job losses experienced by the city of Cornwall in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh. In light of his comments and the negative publicity they created, it gives me great pleasure to report that on October 25, Teleperformance Canada announced it would be opening a brand new facility in Cornwall. This centre will bring 650 new jobs to the city, jobs that are greatly appreciated by the community.

Why did this company choose to locate its new centre in Cornwall? Allow me to answer in the words of Eriofili Morfidis, president and CEO of Teleperformance Canada: “Locating in Cornwall gives us access to a bilingual workforce with a strong reputation for quality work.” That’s right: The people of my riding deliver, and their reputation speaks to this. There is no better form of advertising than word-of-mouth, and this new centre is proof that the word is getting out.

Whatever a business might be looking for, Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh has it to offer in spades. We are perfectly located along the 401, a short drive from Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto, and Cornwall has a bridge connecting us directly to the United States. The populace is, to a great extent, bilingual, and as its reputation states, it consists of some of the hardest-working, loyal people to be found in Ontario.

I take great pride in the dedication and ingenuity of the people of Cornwall and other communities in my riding, such as Chesterville and Long Sault, where job losses have had the greatest impact. I would encourage any company looking to establish a new facility to join Teleperformance Canada in learning just how justifiably proud we are.

MISS G PROJECT

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I rise to recognize individuals visiting the Legislature here today with the Miss G Project. The Miss G Project began with a group of four University of Western Ontario students

who were concerned about the lack of equity in education and gender representation in the secondary school curriculum. These students organized a group of motivated citizens to work together to challenge sexism through education and encourage active citizenship.

The project name comes from an 1873 text by Harvard Medical School Professor Edward H. Clarke. Professor Clarke wrote about the life of Miss G, one of his top students. At the time, Miss G was part of a small group who were beginning to push the accepted boundaries and roles women had in society. Unfortunately, Miss G died, and her professor concluded she died because she didn't have a "good reproductive system" while spending her "intellectual labour."

The main goal of the project is to positively influence secondary school curriculum and to add women's studies courses to the Ontario curriculum. This group believes equity in education is a policy commitment of the Ontario secondary school curriculum, but without recognizing gender and its implications, the curriculum fails to meet this commitment. The Minister of Education takes this student project very seriously and believes that the workshops that have been held are valuable and informative for all students.

I welcome the Miss G Project group to the Legislature today and wish to encourage them in challenging and improving education in Ontario.

VISITORS

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Would you please help me welcome in our gallery today an exchange student with the Rotary Club of Gananoque, Laureano Camano, from Madrid, Spain, and his friend Amy Curtis. They're right in the gallery; if they could stand up.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Welcome. That is not a point of order.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

M. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke-Nord): Je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la justice et je propose son adoption.

I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement /
Projet de loi 211, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la

personne et d'autres lois pour éliminer la retraite obligatoire.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would indulge your office, if you would allow the members of this House to wear the white ribbon. It marks the start of the White Ribbon Campaign, which honours the men and boys who are fighting violence against women.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Ms. Pupatello has asked for unanimous consent to wear the white ribbon. Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LOCAL HEALTH SYSTEM INTEGRATION ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR L'INTÉGRATION DU SYSTÈME DE SANTÉ LOCAL

Mr. Smitherman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services /
Projet de loi 36, Loi prévoyant l'intégration du système local de prestation des services de santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister may have a brief statement.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): In ministerial statements, thank you.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for one representative from each of the three parties to speak for up to five minutes in recognition of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has asked for unanimous consent for representatives of each of the three parties for up to five minutes in recognition of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. Agreed.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I'd like to ask the members of this House to join me in observing the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Here in Ontario and around the world, November 25 is an opportunity to urge people

to take action to stop violence against women. It's also the start of an important two-week period of commemorations and campaigns. The annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, a campaign that reminds us that violence against women is a violation of human rights, runs from November 25 to December 6. Tomorrow also marks the start of the White Ribbon Campaign, when men and boys wear a white ribbon, which many of us in this House are now wearing, to symbolize their dedication to ending violence against women. These campaigns are important because they remind us of our collective responsibility to prevent violence against women. They remind us that building strong, safe communities makes sure that everyone can live free of violence. The next two weeks are an important opportunity to mobilize all members of the community to help those most at risk.

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As minister responsible for women's issues, I've had the privilege to meet women and children who have overcome tremendous odds and become leaders in their communities. I want Ontarians to hear these stories. I want Ontarians to hear the story of a remarkable woman I met just a couple of weeks ago, whose husband beat her for 11 years until she finally overcame her fear and went to a shelter for help. At this shelter, which is now undergoing expansion, she talked about her story, with her young boy, and how her life is going today. A very special thank you to her for being so brave to tell such a tragic story—and having such a wonderful outcome really is the best news of all.

I'm proud to say my government has a plan to help vulnerable women like her, who may not yet have overcome that fear. Less than a year ago, the Premier and I announced our government's domestic violence action plan. That plan involves action by all sectors that come in contact with victims of domestic violence: shelters and other community supports, police officers and the courts, educators and health care professionals.

When I tell the story of a young girl who told her teacher that she was sleeping in class as a result of watching TV all night—she was too ashamed to tell the truth; she had spent the whole night awake listening to her mom being abused by her dad—I'm proud to say that we have a plan for that young girl. As part of the domestic violence action plan, my colleague Madeleine Meilleur and I recently announced a new initiative to provide principals, teachers and counsellors at English- and French-language elementary schools with training that will help them recognize the signs of domestic violence in students and provide the appropriate supports and referrals. We are very pleased to see that that is moving forward quickly. Other important action plan initiatives are constantly being announced as we are rolling out this action plan.

In a few days, I'll be hosting the first-ever Ontario-government-led conference on domestic violence. Experts and front-line workers from a broad spectrum of sectors will share information and strategies. We'll work

toward creating solutions that will allow us to reduce violence against women. The best part of this conference is that it gives the floor to people who come from areas of true excellence in this field, whether that be in community supports, the justice sector or public education. Registration for this conference has far exceeded our expectations. The conference will be Webcast, therefore, so that many more people can participate. Please give me a moment and let me say that Web site address for people to participate: www.findingcommonground.ca.

Together, we are making progress toward ending violence against women. All of us understand how much more work needs to be done in this area, and we are getting a move on that. As we pause to reflect on this International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, I know all members of the House will join me in a renewed and vigorous resolve to put an end to the violence.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm very pleased to rise today on behalf of our leader, John Tory, and our party to recognize tomorrow, November 25, as the international day to eliminate violence against women.

The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1999, and was motivated by the assassination of the three Mirabal sisters on that same date in 1961. They were political activists in the Dominican Republic. The day marks the beginning of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. Lasting until International Human Rights Day on December 10, 16 Days of Activism also encompasses December 1, which is World AIDS Day, and December 6, which marks the anniversary of the Montreal massacre. The 16 Days of Activism have been used as an organizing strategy by organizations and individuals around the world to call for the elimination of all forms of violence against women.

We know that violence against women crosses all geographic, cultural and socio-economic boundaries. The physical, emotional and psychological toll on women who are victims of assault is enormous. We need to remember that violence affects not just the women, but also their children, their family and their friends.

Our leader and our party support the initiatives that help prevent and deal with violence against women. Indeed, our leader, more than 10 years ago, with Jack Layton handed out the white ribbons in Union Station and other places. It was our party that was pleased to introduce and pass the Domestic Violence Protection Act in late 2000. We also increased shelter funding, and we allocated money to create a crisis line for assaulted women, which provided access to 24-hour, 7-day-a-week crisis services for abused women across the province. We also provided \$5 million for an early intervention program for child witnesses of domestic violence, which helped children recover from the effects of witnessing violence in their families.

We support the action being taken by the government on domestic violence. However, we would also encour-

age the government to keep their commitment on affordable housing for families, because if we don't, this particularly hurts the low-income families that are headed by women.

I'm pleased to hear the government will do more to help the victims of violence. However, this is a non-partisan issue and we all need to continue to work together and do what we can to ensure that women are more economically independent, and that they have the supports in place so that they and their children can and are able to leave abusive situations.

It is the responsibility of all of us in this House and all Ontarians to take the steps necessary to bring an end to violence against women and all forms of gender-based violence.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'm happy to be standing on behalf of Howard Hampton and the Ontario New Democratic Party to speak about November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and the 16 days to follow. I'm looking forward to hearing more announcements from the government on programs and supports for all of those agencies that are operating out there on a shoestring, that are working hard to help women and their children escape from violence.

Today is, of course, likely the last time I'll be speaking in this Legislature about this yearly campaign to end violence against women. I feel that government, and I've seen that government, has a paramount role to play in this struggle. It has been a major part of my work as an MPP over the past 15 years. It's been an honour to work with all parties, all members over those years, through different governments, on so many of these issues.

When I was part of government, we made some strides on this front, like providing a safe place for women to go, which is critical in breaking the cycle of violence. We stabilized, for the first time, funding for shelters, and we continued to build affordable housing despite the terrible recession that was happening, because we recognized that affordable housing was a key ingredient in terms of women leaving a violent situation.

When the Conservatives were in government, I was proud to have worked with Frances Lankin, the then MPP for Beaches-East York, and the government, and of course the community which worked hard on this for years, to expand the assault helpline province-wide.

The minister talked about some of the key things within the Liberal domestic violence action plan. I want to take a few minutes, once again, to talk about some of the key things that aren't in the plan and that I know the minister is aware of. I know that her commitment is real and that she will want to ensure that before the end of their mandate these things are done, because they're absolutely essential.

1400

One of them—and I've spoken many times on this—is restoring funding for second-stage housing. I don't need to go into a lot of detail about why that is so important. We know that after the Conservative government fell—

funding had been stopped for second-stage housing, and the Liberals said they would bring it back. That hasn't been done. A new program, which we support, was brought in. Some of the money is going into some of the existing second-stage housing, but some is also going into this other transitional program, so existing second-stage housing, who thought they were going to get full funding restored, didn't get it, and they are having a terrible time. I know the members are aware of that, and hopefully we will see some action on restoring that funding.

Another thing I want to mention briefly: I'm sure we'll all agree that we have to provide new, stable, long-term support to emergency shelters so they can expand their staffing, programs and operations. We hear time and time again that shelters have to turn women and their children away because they are filled beyond capacity. This has been a reality for a number of years. We desperately need the funding to expand these shelters. Last year, the Globe and Mail reported how a shelter that I'm very close to in my riding, Nellie's, was forced to refuse more than 700 requests. That is another thing that I believe is absolutely essential, which we have to see included in this plan.

The third thing I want to mention briefly is an issue that has been a difficult one in this House, because it's about the death of Lori Dupont, the nurse who was recently murdered at her workplace in Windsor. I want to reiterate once again how important it is to bring sexual harassment and other kinds of harassment under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. It's absolutely critical that that be done so we don't have another murder like this happening in the workplace.

Finally, I do want to say that I'm proud to be wearing the white ribbon today. This is the white ribbon organization established by Jack Layton many years ago. He's the MP in my riding of Toronto-Danforth. I think it is one of the most important things that Mr. Layton established in this province. I'm very pleased that we're standing here today to acknowledge the work by boys and men as well on this very important issue.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It is with great pride that I rise today in this chamber to speak to a bill which truly qualifies as historic, and I'm honoured to do so in the presence of not just members of our Legislature but our inaugural board chairs and CEOs of local health integration networks.

I'm referring to the Local Health System Integration Act, which I tabled just a few moments ago. This bill represents the next step—and the most important step—

in our government's efforts to transform this province's health care system, to transform it into something more effective, more transparent and more accountable, to build a true health care system.

When our party took office just over two years ago, health care in Ontario faced some serious difficulties. There was a lack of planning and organization. Services were delivered in an uncoordinated way. There was too little communication between hospitals, long-term-care homes, mental health agencies and other providers. They didn't share information or best practices. They didn't always look for ways to work together.

I often wondered if our so-called health care system really was a system at all. Clearly, delivering services in this way leads to gaps in service, and too often, it makes it too difficult for patients to figure out who does what. Equally troubling, important decisions were made behind closed doors here at Queen's Park, usually with very little input from those most affected by the decisions, namely, patients.

I'm proud to say that this government took a good, hard look at the situation, and we developed a plan to fix it. In order to undertake a job this big, we set some clear priorities: reducing wait times, improving access to nurses and doctors and making Ontarians healthier. I'm proud to say that over the past two years, we have taken some bold steps to reform the system and bring us closer to these three goals.

Earlier this year, we introduced the toughest, most comprehensive anti-tobacco package in North America, including aggressive smoke-free legislation which takes effect next spring.

We're working hard on Operation Health Protection, a plan to revitalize our public health system to ensure that we're able to deal with things like disease outbreaks. We've strengthened the role of the chief medical officer of health and revitalized the public health system.

We're improving access to doctors and nurses with the creation of family health teams and investments to increase the number of doctors and nurses in this province. We're increasing medical school enrolment by 15% over the next four years. We're also increasing the number of family residency positions by 70%, and we're training more international medical graduates than ever before.

We're also working to increase the number of nurses in the province and to make their jobs more satisfying and safe. We've already created 3,062 new, full-time nursing jobs, and the percentage of full-time nursing jobs has increased from 51.7% a year ago to 59% today, according to the College of Nurses.

We're taking action to fix wait times, and we're creating a system to measure and report to patients about wait times, including a Web site available to all Ontarians with the most up-to-date information on wait times, broken down by procedure, hospital and local health integration networks.

The people of Ontario also deserve independent proof that they're getting a system that delivers the best possible quality of care, and we're delivering this through

the Ontario Health Quality Council. But there is more to be done, some of it decades overdue.

The legislation I have introduced today represents one of the most important pieces of the solution. If passed, this bill will be the most significant, far-reaching and enduring reform of all. If passed, it will give real power to communities and people, creating a system which is genuinely transparent.

The most significant changes have to do with the powers we are granting to local health integration networks. The powers we are proposing to devolve to Ontario's 14 LHINs amount to nothing less than a \$20-billion transfer of decision-making power out of Queen's Park and into the hands of local communities.

There's no argument about the fact that change is needed. That's especially true for a \$33-billion operation like our health care system. The real question is whether, where and how these decisions should be made. Our answer to that question rests on a simple premise: In an environment where we all agree there will be fewer resources than we might prefer, it's just common sense that we ask people from local communities, closer to the action, to help to determine which local priorities must be supported first. They should be made in the communities affected, not hundreds or even thousands of miles away here at Queen's Park. These decisions should be made by working with the people most affected, namely, patients.

This bill, if passed, will give LHINs the power to do just that, to include the people of Ontario in this conversation. LHINs will have the power to integrate, plan and fund their local health systems. They will also have a responsibility to monitor the performance of their local health system and its health services and to engage their communities to identify health priorities or problems.

Local health integration networks will also have a duty, I dare say an obligation, to consult with communities about the decisions that are before them. This legislation makes it very clear that decisions must be made on the basis of public interest and in the full view of the public.

Specifically, LHINs will have responsibility for hospitals, community care access centres, mental health and addiction agencies, long-term-care homes, community health centres and community support service organizations. The province will initially retain responsibility for ambulance services, laboratories, provincial drug programs, independent health facilities and public health.

Obviously one of the things LHINs will try to do is identify opportunities for greater efficiency, say by consolidating some back office functions and reducing duplication. Are there savings to be realized? Of course there are. But the savings realized by local health integration networks will be reinvested where they are needed most: in patient care. These decisions will be made on the advice of those closest to the action.

This is not an exercise in cutting costs; this is an exercise in empowerment. It's not an effort to introduce sweeping restructuring; it's an effort to do the exact op-

posite, to provide a degree of stability, of local accountability.

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This bill is about more than just LHINs. As its name suggests, it's about system integration, and another part of this integration is community care access centres. Community care access centres are a crucial part of our health care system, but there is room for improvement. At present, clients in some parts of Ontario are receiving services that are not available to others. That's not equitable. Under our proposed changes, there will be no disruption in the crucial relationship between case managers and clients, and all existing CCAC storefronts and offices—all 209 of them—would remain in place.

But in order to provide more efficient, more effective service, this bill would enable us to reduce the number of CCACs from 42 to 14, in order to align with LHIN boundaries. CCACs are aware of this proposed realignment. In fact, many of them advised us to do it, because this alignment makes sense. It will create a system positioned to provide improved and equitable access for all CCAC clients and contribute to improved efficiencies.

We're also introducing changes to allow CCACs to select their own members and executive directors. By taking this step, we will be returning CCACs to the communities that they serve, reversing a move by the previous administration to steal CCACs away from their communities.

Finally, this bill will allow us to broaden the mandate of CCACs, permitting them to serve in an expanded role as system navigators for the first point of contact for a broader array of services. CCACs are an important and effective part of our health care delivery system. We want to make them stronger still.

Mr. Speaker, as you and other members of this chamber will have noticed, there is a consistent theme to these changes, and it is this: The best way to make decisions about change is as close to the ground as possible. Any business person or management expert will tell you that change is essential in order to survive. They'll also tell you that you can't run a \$33-billion operation from head office. The reforms contained in this bill will, for the first time, enable communities to make the necessary changes and achieve the necessary integration.

I've always believed that one of the fundamental tests of any public institution is equity. The legislation I am introducing today represents a profound step in this direction, as we return one of the public's most precious assets to them. I'm extremely proud of these reforms. I'm absolutely certain that it's the right thing to do. The big winners will, of course, be the people we serve—the people of Ontario.

GROWTH PLANNING

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I rise today to inform all honourable members that my ministry is releasing the government's proposed growth

plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe today. This marks the first time in a generation that the province has re-engaged in long-term planning. As members may be aware, the greater Golden Horseshoe contributes more than two thirds of our province's gross domestic product and almost one third of the gross domestic product of Canada.

We recognize that the greater Golden Horseshoe needs a growth plan, a plan that looks beyond the boundaries of any one municipality and covers the entire region, while still giving individual municipalities the flexibility they need to meet their own identified priorities.

You will recall that in June we passed the Places to Grow Act, groundbreaking legislation that enables the province to designate growth plan areas and develop growth plans. The greater Golden Horseshoe is the first designated area under the act.

We are beginning the growth planning process right there in the greater Golden Horseshoe because of the tremendous growth pressures that are expected to occur over the next quarter of a century. By 2031, some 3.7 million more people are expected to settle here in the province of Ontario, and the vast majority of these people will choose to live in the greater Golden Horseshoe. This population increase is roughly equivalent to the combined populations of Vancouver, Calgary and Winnipeg. And make no mistake: This growth is very much desired, it is very much needed to strengthen and diversify our society, to help grow our economy and to enable us to sustain both our quality of life and our cherished social programs.

Much of our population growth in the greater Golden Horseshoe will be from immigration. This growth will ensure that we have a range of skilled workers necessary to continue to attract new investment and provide new opportunities for our communities. Although growth is important to the provincial economy, we need to be strategic about it, and that's what the proposed growth plan is all about—ensuring we have places to grow business, places to grow food, places to grow trees and, most importantly, places to grow families. It's about informed, strategic decision-making.

Our government has a proposed growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe to ensure that this region continues to attract new business and to support an exceptional quality of life for residents, now and in the future. The proposed growth plan is a coordinated strategy that would create more livable communities, where people are close to shops, parks and jobs; revitalize downtown neighbourhoods; provide greater choice in housing types; curb urban sprawl and preserve valuable green spaces and agricultural lands; reduce traffic gridlock by improving access to a range of transportation choices; and get better use of existing public infrastructure investments in schools, hospitals, water and sewage systems.

The proposed growth plan is designed to ensure that better planning goes hand in hand with strategic investment. It supports the development of more compact and

complete communities, with the right mix of housing, a good range of jobs, convenient transit and easy access to stores and services to meet the daily needs of residents. The plan also complements the Golden Horseshoe greenbelt that protects the natural and agricultural lands so vital to this area.

The proposed growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe supports greater intensification in our urban areas, but this does not mean, as some have suggested, that the plan favours high-rise development over other housing types. Indeed, intensification can take many forms, including modest increases in building heights along major streets, denser industrial parks and employment areas, and a greater variety of housing options, such as stacked townhouses and medium-rise apartments.

Members should also be aware that my ministry's research indicates that the greater Golden Horseshoe currently has a sufficient land supply available to accommodate the future growth we are expecting. As the population of the greater Golden Horseshoe continues to grow, people will continue to have access to a wide range of housing options and, importantly, at competitive prices. My ministry will continue to monitor the land supply issue in the future and to consult with our individual municipal partners on the need for additional urban lands as they may be needed to accommodate future growth.

For many years, municipal leaders and indeed other stakeholders have been calling for provincial leadership and planning, and our government is finally doing something about it. We are committed to providing strong, effective leadership on planning issues, the kind of leadership that ensures that our future development occurs in a more compact and transit-friendly way, creating more vibrant communities, providing better protection for our environment and promoting healthier lifestyles for our residents.

By developing a growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe, we are taking a significant step to ensure the strength of the province; indeed, a significant step to ensure the strength of our nation.

As members will recall, my ministry released a draft growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe last February for comment and input from key stakeholders and from residents in the province. That document received strong support, and our general direction has not changed. However, based on the feedback we received, the proposed growth plan is more focused and more strategic. We have also clarified some policies to ensure the successful implementation of the final plan.

I am pleased to say that there is a growing consensus around not only the need to plan effectively for growth, but also around the specific provisions in our proposed growth plan. In releasing the proposed growth plan today, indeed we are seeking even more input and feedback from the public and from stakeholders as a final step before releasing the final growth plan early next year.

The Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal is placing public notices in selected newspapers starting today

in the greater Golden Horseshoe and a notice on the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry to inform the public how they can obtain a copy of the document and, importantly, how they can provide their valuable insight and input. The proposed growth plan is also being posted on the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal Web site.

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Our government is working to ensure that growth planning and development within the greater Golden Horseshoe complements the very significant investments we are making in public infrastructure. Through ReNew Ontario, our government's five-year infrastructure investment plan, we earmarked some \$7.5 billion in infrastructure investments to make improvements right here in the greater Golden Horseshoe. Our efforts to plan proactively for the future growth that we know is coming in this part of the province will ensure that vital facilities and services are in place when and where they are needed.

The proposed growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe represents a key step toward our objectives and planning for a successful future. In short, a growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe will ensure that residents of this area and throughout the province of Ontario continue to enjoy economic prosperity, a high standard of living and an exceptional quality of life.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Response?

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I am pleased to respond to the announcement made regarding the LHINs legislation today. Despite the rhetoric we hear coming from the minister, the reality is that LHINs are focused on a system and organizations creating 14 new bureaucracies and have little to do with taking a look at and improving the experience of patients within our system.

Contrary to what the minister said about returning health to local communities and local decision-making, what we have is the creation of 14 new bureaucracies. These bureaucracies, these LHINs, have a minister-approved CEO and boards that are political appointments. So what we are actually doing is politicizing the system of health in the province of Ontario. In fact, this announcement steals local autonomy away from the people in the local communities. I would ask, where is the community voice? There should be an obligation on the part of the LHINs to consult with the public. There should be a process, and there is not. This simply talks about community engagement. There is absolutely no process. All we have are political appointees making decisions on behalf of huge communities.

There should also be an appeal process when a community disagrees with a LHIN decision, and that is not there. These LHINs are being given tremendous power. They are being given the opportunity to make decisions about amalgamating hospital services and programs, even

eliminating one hospital or eliminating community services, and there is no opportunity if a community disagrees.

For example, let's take Cambridge hospital. Maybe the reason the money is not flowing to Cambridge is because there is a secret plan in the minister's office to do away with Cambridge hospital and shift the services to one of the other Kitchener or Hamilton offices.

There is no appeal process whatsoever, but there is tremendous power being given to these LHINs. Regrettably, health is a complex system, and the health system is all about people. Today's announcement is not about people. We need to make sure that we better respond to the needs of the patients within our health system. The OMA has talked about the lack of family doctors. The nurses have told us about the need for more nurses. Emergency doctors have told us about the impact of this government's demand that hospitals balance their budgets. In fact, there are not enough nurses, not enough beds. So I would say that this announcement today totally eliminates any accountability to the local community. It eliminates local autonomy. There is no process for input whatsoever. I would encourage you, as you take a look at this legislation, to put in place a mechanism. This gives a lot of power to very, very few people.

The other thing I would say is that there's a lot of concern about the size of the LHINs. For example, someone living in Owen Sound is in the same LHIN as someone living in St. Thomas or in London. Again, people are concerned about their lack of ability to have any real input to decisions being made by that particular LHIN, and that is across the whole province.

The other thing we need to take into consideration is that a huge amount of money is being spent on creating 14 new bureaucracies. There are going to be huge legal costs, as most of the legislation within the Ministry of Health and labour legislation is going to have to be amended. There is going to be a need for unions to come together—union harmonization—severance costs and other costs. This ministry has not presented us with any cost estimates at this time, money that, by the way, could be better spent on patient care.

There's also no timeline as far as implementation, and that's a fault of this government time and time again. They make wonderful announcements, but, as in the case of the family health teams, where we know there's only one fully operational and 67 announced, we have no idea as to when these LHINs are going to be implemented, what the timeline is, what this is going to cost taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

When it comes to CCACs, the minister talks about returning power to the community. I can tell you, the minister has no plan to return any power to the community, because they are going to appoint the next directors, again, themselves: cabinet appointments. I would say to you that much of what is contained herein is all about systems, not—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Further response?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to respond to the statement by the Minister of Health by focusing on what Ontarians want from, or expect of, their health care system, because this is what the LHINs are supposed to respond to at the local level. Patients want three things: (1) the health care that they need; (2) when they need it; and (3) as close to home as possible. Let me deal with those three things.

(1) The health care that they need: Frankly, that's a function of how much money government makes available to the system, and it's a function of government policies about who gets those health care services. Let me give you three examples:

First, many Ontarians see chiropractic care and eye exams as essential health care services, but this government cut the funding for those important services, and there's nothing in the LHIN legislation that's going to get those health care services back.

Second, cancer patients were here last week because they need access to chemotherapy drugs that have been approved by Health Canada but are still under review here in Ontario. One of those patients who was here, Jim Leslie, desperately needs those treatments. It's the only thing that might work for him. Getting the health care that he needs means having this government and this minister adopt an exemption policy for chemotherapy drugs on a compassionate basis. That's not anything that the LHIN legislation is going to do.

Third, we've got many seniors and disabled who need greater access to home care, but this government has still not rescinded the regulations put in place by the former Conservative government, which limit the number of hours of home care that you can receive and also restrict access to homemaking services unless you have a personal care need. People who want to stay in their own homes longer can't do that because of these restrictions, and there's nothing in the LHIN legislation that's going to change that for them, either.

(2) People want health care when they need it: This is a function of the availability of operating rooms, health care providers in the system to meet medical needs and the availability of hospital beds, long-term-care beds and community services. Let me give you three examples:

First, the coalition of emergency physicians is filing a complaint with the Ombudsman because they believe that patients in Ontario don't have an ability to access life-saving care in emergency when they need it, and that the government failed to provide that. The wait times in emergency are not included as one of the five wait time priorities of this government. But I can tell you, for a lot of those 5.2 million Ontarians who access emergency rooms every year, that is a priority, their wait time for life-saving care in emergency. The LHIN legislation can't deal with that.

Second, Sudbury has had an ongoing crisis with respect to alternate-level-of-care patients for over a year now. You've got patients who come to the hospital for an operation and who are having to go back home or somewhere else in northeastern Ontario because there are

no beds, because there are too many alternate-level-of-care patients who can't get access to long-term-care beds or to addiction services in our community. So you've got a revolving door and you've got, in most recent weeks, this being a very public matter again, people having to go home with surgery being cancelled, and now, the spectre of long-term-care patients having to go to Parry Sound to get access to a long-term-care bed. Nothing in the LHIN legislation is going to deal with this.

The third example is human resources when people need them. You've got too many patients being discharged from hospitals who can't get physiotherapy services from the CCAC. You had the Ontario Nurses' Association here last week complaining that there are not enough nurses in the hospital system to provide the care nurses need to provide; that nurses in public health, for example, can't even deal with mandated public health services, never mind getting ready for a flu pandemic. You had OANHSS here just this week, saying that residents in long-term-care facilities can't get the care they need, because there is not enough money to hire more personal support workers. There are nurses having too many patients to care for, and all of those patients can't get the specialized services they need. The LHIN legislation isn't going to deal with that.

1430

Thirdly, people want to get their health care as close to home as possible. I can tell you that when people start seeing words like "consolidation" in my part of the world, they think that means they're going to have to travel even longer and even farther to get the health care they deserve. When I look at the geographic boundaries of the LHINs, and I see that the LHINs are going to have authority to consolidate services, in my part of the world that means people coming from northwestern Ontario are now going to have to travel for even more services to Thunder Bay, and other people, in northeastern Ontario, are going to have to travel for even more services to the regional centre at Sudbury. I don't want to see people having to travel like that. I want to make sure those services are in the community hospitals. I don't see that happening with this process.

Finally, I'm really worried about patients' continuity of care because nothing has been more disruptive than the competitive bidding process in home care. If this is the model that's applied to LHINs when they purchase services, that disruption for patients will now be across a broad spectrum of health care services, and that will be disastrous.

VISITORS

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to welcome in the public gallery four guests from India. One is Satish Mehta, the Consul General of India. The others are Rajesh Tope, minister of state for urban development in the state of Maharashtra; Rajendra Shingne, minister of state for rehabilitation, resettlement and

revenue, also from the state of Maharashtra; and Sunil Deshmukh, minister of state for finance and planning for the state.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. Today you announced, and talked about here in the House, a plan to create 14 new health care bureaucracies, but noticeably absent from your plan and from any of the discussion you engaged in today was the cost of this scheme. Could you tell us how much it will cost for this local health integration bureaucracy? How much will this cost the taxpayers of Ontario?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate the nature of the honourable member's question and his ringing endorsement for the status quo. I'm troubled to think that a person who once held the high office of CEO of a company has now come to the conclusion that a head office ought to run the whole kit and caboodle. The circumstance we're seeking to address is the idea that a \$33-billion operation ought no longer to be managed from head office. The circumstances associated with that are that it's hard for the head office, therefore, to rise to the strategic level required to fulfill its important obligations in areas such as health human resources or information technology.

With respect to costs, all of these are contained in our government's estimates. I can confirm for the honourable member that any expense related to this initiative will be dealt with from within the existing allocation for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Mr. Tory: I think somebody pushed the wrong button there, because we got the wrong answer. Actually, there was no answer.

Let me try again. Here's what we do know: According to leaked cabinet documents from your ministry, you have already spent \$16 million to shut down district health councils that cost \$18 million a year to operate. In their place, you're creating 14 new bureaucracies that are estimated to cost \$55 million a year to operate by 2007. In addition to that, we know you're going to reduce the number of CCACs, the organizations that coordinate home care and long-term-care services for our seniors, from 42 to 14, at an estimated cost for that of \$100 million of taxpayers' money.

Will you confirm what is in these cabinet documents, namely, that your new LHIN bureaucracies will cost \$55 million a year to run, on top of at least \$116 million in costs associated with firing and then rehiring bureaucrats across the system? Will you confirm those numbers?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'm in a position to confirm neither the numbers nor the characterization the honourable member offers, because it's all inaccurate. The reality is that in our printed estimates are the expenses related to local health integration networks. There's another thing in those expense lines too, the indication that the changes we've made to district health councils mean that on a going-forward basis nearly \$20 million worth of expenditure is now available to support other initiatives to enhance our capacity to deliver care in a coordinated fashion. The honourable member wants to stand in his place and wrap his arms around the status quo, and that is his choice. But I say, sir, you should take the time, take a look at what we call a system now and at what we are attempting to bring together: capacity that's in the same place, closer to the action, in local communities, with people dedicated to their communities.

That's what these people are. To call them political appointments is an unsavoury approach. These individuals were selected by their community, and many of them enjoy a relationship or no relationship with a variety of political parties. The initiative we're building is to bring together all these pieces so that we can, for once in Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tory: I didn't know we invited community people into the cabinet meeting where you made those appointments. I don't recall any community people being involved at all, but anyway.

My supplementary to the minister: What this amounts to is potentially tens of millions of dollars—in fact, well in excess of \$100 million of taxpayers' money—being spent on new bureaucracies that will do nothing for individual patients. This week alone, we've had emergency room doctors here saying wait times in Ontario are twice as long as they should be. We've had the Ontario Medical Association saying that access to a family doctor on your watch is getting worse, not better, and that 1.4 million Ontarians will have no family doctor by the end of the year. You've already spent \$90 million to fire 757 nurses.

So you don't have any answers. You tell us to look here and look there and so forth as to the cost, but you've managed to spend more than \$100 million of taxpayers' money to hire more high-priced bureaucrats. Can you name one specific benefit that will accrue to a patient in Ontario as a result of this \$100 million plus that you're—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Firstly, to repeat what I said earlier, the honourable member can make up all the numbers he wants, but the printed estimates are the place in this world where we look for those costs, on the example he asks for.

I recently had the chance to be in Bramalea at the launch of the Central West Health Integration Network. Two women approached me, one from Hospice Peel and one from Hospice Dufferin. They said, "For eight long years now, we've been trying to get the ministry to

resolve a \$22,000 differential in the way we've been funded." For eight years they railed against a system that couldn't deliver them equity on that basis. I'm pretty sure that, with Joe McReynolds as the chair of the local health integration network for Central West, they will resolve that to the benefit of patients, the same patients, sir, that you represent.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock.

New question. The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: It's another statement of good intentions, but as we know, that will amount to nothing.

My question is for the Minister of Health. While it appears to be boom town and the biggest day ever for new bureaucrats under your watch, we're seeing the real story of what's happening to health care in communities across the province. Just today, Quinte Healthcare, covering hospitals in Belleville, Trenton, Picton and Bancroft, released a letter from you that comments on the \$6.8-million deficit at the hospital and the plan submitted to you to close beds and cut patient services. You say in your letter to them, "Based on a preliminary review of the materials we have received ... your ... consolidations appear to have merit," referring to the closure of surgical beds in Trenton.

Minister, why are you giving the green light to close surgical beds in Trenton while you're spending tens of millions of dollars the very same day to hire new bureaucrats for the Ministry of Health?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Simply put, we support the proposals that have come forward from Trenton because the surgical beds that are in discussion are not being utilized. I think if you looked at the other consolidations that are now being advanced by the Quinte Healthcare Corp., you would see them as sensible: the idea, as an example, that when you have four hospitals working together, you might actually provide all of one service at one place, for two simple reasons, and the first is because the clinical evidence is clear, almost always, that the outcomes are better, and the nurse who sits behind you could probably confirm that for you; and secondly—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: No, I mean it. It's a well-known fact we're operating on here.

The second piece is that it will benefit from the standpoint of resources. We want to continue to contribute to more resources at the Quinte Healthcare Corp. They got more money this year than last year, and they're going to get a \$100-million redevelopment. This is evidence of our commitment to the people in Quinte, but we do believe there's a better way to integrate the system down there, and we applaud the leadership in the local community that has come to these conclusions.

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Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): Time for a shuffle.

Mr. Tory: It was time for a shuffle a long time ago.

My supplementary to the minister is this: The story doesn't stop with the \$6.8-million funding shortfall at

Quinte Healthcare. Tomorrow, Lakeridge Health, covering hospitals in Bowmanville, Oshawa, Port Perry and Whitby, will be revealing details of the drastic measures they have to take to deal with their \$14-million deficit.

According to a story in the *Scucog Standard*, the hospital CEO admitted that all the cuts that could be made have been made, and that includes over 300 layoffs including cuts to nursing staff in Port Perry. The article quotes the hospital CEO as saying the 300 layoffs will still not come close to dealing with the current deficit, and that to get the deficit under control—again according to the CEO—will require reductions in patient care.

Their plan is on your desk, Minister. On the very same day you've managed to find in excess of \$100 million to create new health care bureaucracies in this province for bureaucrats, you have a choice between funding their deficit and dealing with that or having more cuts take place—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: You can offer up a number that you've made up all you want, but until you offer some proof of it, it seems to me important that the honourable member stand in his place and take the opportunity to be just a little more forthright with genuine information rather than what is a figment of his imagination.

The reality is that the challenge we have in health care is clear. Hospitals in Ontario have benefited from \$2.35 billion worth of new investment since our government came to life—every hospital in the province of Ontario—and Lakeridge Health system has been among those. What I'm looking forward to in the case of both Lakeridge and Quinte, hospital networks that came together through your government's restructuring plans, is to give them the opportunity for once, especially in those smaller centres, to define the core services to make sure everybody is clear on which services will be provided at all those hospitals. Lakeridge is doing difficult work. We appreciate that people from the community, embraced of the leadership responsibility of community, are exercising those judgments in partnership with government.

Mr. Tory: It's interesting how enthusiastic you are about all these changes taking place around the province, but not the people who are actually involved, especially of course the 300 people so far who are without their jobs.

Now we have the \$6.8-million deficit and the bed closures in Trenton, we have the 300 layoffs and the cuts to patient services at Lakeridge, and of course we have the ongoing deficit struggle at Sarnia's Bluewater Health care. According to your own member, Bluewater's deficit stands at \$14 million and 170 layoffs have already been announced, effective December 31. That will still leave them with a \$2-million deficit.

Again, the plan to deal with that deficit is on your desk. You did have a choice. You decided to sign the one that hired dozens of bureaucrats for \$100-million-plus, and yet you've not dealt with the challenges being faced by people in Sarnia, Trenton, Belleville, Picton, Bancroft,

Oshawa, Whitby, Port Perry and Bowmanville. How can you cut them while you're hiring bureaucrats?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: You'd think that a party leader who enjoys the same family name as his party's name would at least be pleased to stand in his place and acknowledge the fact that two parties in this Legislature today that have had the privilege of governing in the last 10 or 15 years—two of three parties have reduced funding for hospitals. The Liberal Party is not one of those.

Each hospital in the province of Ontario received more money last year than the year before and received more money this year than last year. They also received something else long promised: local, stable, predictable funding, something long-promised in the hospital sector in Ontario. We're investing an additional half billion dollars in hospitals this year, evidence, alongside the unprecedented largest investments in community care, that we are a government that recognizes health care is simply not about hospitals, as you pretended, but rather about the way all services come together to the benefit of patients. This initiative is about patients, something the honourable member doesn't seem to understand because he's always—

The Speaker: Thank you.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is for the Acting Premier. Today, Campaign 2000 released its 2005 report card on child poverty in Canada. The findings are shocking to everyone who cares about children in this province. Shocking finding number one is that a lone parent with one child living in a large city like Toronto, Ottawa or Hamilton needs \$24,475 annually to meet basic needs. From your government they only get \$14,875. That is a \$10,000 gap. How come you broke the promise you made to the people of Ontario in the last election and froze Ontario Works and ODSP rates in your last budget?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Thank you so much for addressing this report that came out today. It's a report that I hope will galvanize governments at all levels—members of Parliament, members of Legislatures across the country—to renew and redouble their efforts to deal with poverty issues. I can tell you that, as this member knows, we have been working diligently to address that.

What we have done since we became the government two years ago is instill the first 3% increase in both welfare rates as well as disability rates for the first time in 12 years. In fact, individuals had not seen a raise since the early 1990s. This makes it extremely difficult. But what is really poignant is that today is now the second day that we've had reports that speak to individuals being hungry. Yesterday we had the food banks here tabling a

report that showed some extremely difficult trends—trends that tell us we have much more work to do. We will continue to have opportunities to make a difference for people in Ontario.

Mr. Prue: I would agree that you have much more work to do. It could have started in the last budget but did not, and it could still continue. If you think this is an emergency, take it from the emergency fund.

Shocking finding number two from that same report: A job is no ticket out of poverty in Ontario. Forty-eight percent of all poor children live in families with parents who are employed year-round. This would not happen if we had a livable minimum wage in Ontario. Minister, I know you've increased it to \$7.50—I know that—but it's not enough. When will you increase the minimum wage to a livable amount so that children do not go hungry?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: Let me say again that when this House had information tabled before it to vote on that would increase the minimum wage, the member opposite voted against that item. That is a shame.

Let me say this: This member opposite had seen our plan—not just one increase but a continual increase throughout our first term, and that is important. As well, as mentioned yesterday in this House, we know that the last federal budget, tabled only two weeks ago, shows the federal government as well making significant improvements in taxation levels for low-income earners. This is the same party that is trying to take that government down. These are significant initiatives that make a huge difference, not just for people who are on social assistance but people who are earning at a low level. This is a group that is a great concern to us because this is a very difficult trend to see: individuals like this who are increasingly using food banks.

Mr. Prue: If your shouting and your finger-pointing and all the things you say over there would put food on the table, the kids wouldn't be hungry. Unfortunately, they don't.

Shocking figure number three: 41% of poor children use food banks. That's 144,234 children in this province. It must be pretty difficult for you to read that, and it must be pretty difficult for the McGuinty government, because during the election you promised to stop the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. The Premier said it was immoral. Today the McGuinty government continues to claw back up to \$2,800 in federal child benefits from poor, hungry children each and every year.

Tell all those children—I want to hear it from your lips—when will the McGuinty government stand up for them, keep its promise and stop the clawback of the child tax benefit?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: I guess I have a question for the member opposite, and I want to be serious: Tell me why, when you see this government make the moves in the direction that is finally the right direction, finally relieving the national child benefit to the tune of \$37 million, this member opposite voted against the measure. Please tell me why.

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We finally, as a provincial government, have a labour market agreement with the federal government that will pour hundreds of millions of dollars for new Canadians—many of whom are captured in these statistics—who are not doing well enough as new Canadian families in Ontario. Will I see you support that measure, or will you again be opposed?

I have to say this: We all agree that we have more work to do, and we work diligently on this every day. But I need to see you come clean. We are moving in the right direction and you absolutely have to support us on those measures.

FEDERAL LIBERAL ELECTION PROMISES

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I have a question for the Acting Premier. This week, ordinary families have witnessed the Paul Martin Liberals engaging in the most cynical, confused and desperate attempt to buy votes in Canadian history.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. You may not be surprised that I'm having difficulty hearing. The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Ms. Churley: People support—and the NDP support—investments in the things that matter most to people, but people don't support Liberals using taxpayer dollars for flashy pre-election photo ops that are just attempts to buy votes.

Acting Premier, you know the date of the Ontario election. You are keenly aware of your timetable for keeping promises. So will you agree today to impose a 60-day pre-election freeze on taxpayer-funded government photo ops to spare ordinary families from Paul-Martin-style vote-buying in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The member opposite is clearly still here physically, but obviously she has made the move out of the Legislature to another potential career opportunity. As long as her interests and ours don't conflict, we wish her well in that endeavour.

Let me say this: This government has brought forward a ban on partisan political advertising in Ontario. This government is attempting to reform political finance in this province but the NDP is blocking the passage of the legislation, and we can't intervene with that. This party and Premier Dalton McGuinty have worked hard to get good deals from the federal government. Those deals are being signed this week. The federal and provincial governments continue to work together to ensure the best interests of the people of Ontario. We are less concerned about cheap partisan games—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Churley: What piffle. What absolute piffle. After 12 years of spending announcements and then breaking promises, this week the Paul Martin Liberals flew around the country, giant rubber cheques in tow, holding flashy

photo ops, making pre-election promises worth \$10 billion and counting. People support investments in people, but they find taxpayer-funded flashy government photo ops just days before an election dishonest and distasteful.

Again, you know the date of the Ontario election. You are keenly aware of your timeline for keeping promises. I ask you again, will you agree today to impose a 60-day pre-election freeze on taxpayer-funded flashy government photo ops to spare ordinary families from Paul-Martin-style vote-buying in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: This province fought for 25 years for those agreements, and these ministers got them for us. We ought to be proud about that.

Now, as we're having a little dialogue about what's said in an election and what's delivered upon assuming office, the member opposite was talking—

Interjection: Agenda for People.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Yes, the Agenda for People, in 1990. The member opposite campaigned and said, "We will bring in public auto insurance," and what did they do? They didn't do it. They didn't bring in public auto insurance. This was the party of organized labour that stood up for collective bargaining, and what did they do when they came to office? They stripped collective agreements across the province. This is the party that was for working people, for poor people, and when they came to office, more than a thousand people a month lost their jobs on their watch. If we are going to talk about ethics and politics, if I were a voter in the riding of Beaches, I would ask that member, "Why did you say one thing running and do quite another when you got elected?"

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock.

Member for Toronto—Danforth.

Ms. Churley: It was insane. It was nuts. It was like a hundred monkeys on hallucinogens writing cheques. That's how your good friend Warren Kinsella describes what's happening in Ottawa, and we agree.

Again, ordinary families want politicians to keep their promises when they're in office, and you guys wrote the book on broken promises. Who said, "We will not raise your taxes"? It was the Liberals. They don't want to see pre-election rubber-cheque tours with post-dated solutions for stale-dated promises.

If you won't impose a 60-day pre-election freeze on taxpayer-funded flashy government photo ops, will you agree to strike a committee with representatives from all three parties to set rules for limiting flashy government pre-election photo ops to prevent Paul-Martin-style vote-buying in Ontario? Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I guess the member really is anxious to get out of here and go to another place.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Yes, she's gone already.

Let me say this. Talking about transparency, when we assumed office, there was a \$5.5-billion deficit that hadn't been reported by the previous Conservative gov-

ernment. As part of our first budget, my colleague and predecessor brought in full disclosure; that is, prior to an election, the government must allow its books to be audited. What did that member do? She voted against it. She voted against improved accountability. That member and her party left a legacy of poverty, of unemployment, of broken promises, of a 54% increase in tuition after they said they would—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Duncan:—hydro increases of 43% while they were the government of Ontario.

The Speaker: Thank you. Stop the clock.

Please sit down.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. New question?

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LAYOFFS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): At the risk of prompting more arm-waving and pirouettes from over there, I will ask my question of the Acting Premier. This has been a devastating week for families and communities across Ontario left dealing with layoffs just in time for Christmas. Worse, there has been no leadership, no help, not even really a measure of any empathy at all for these men and women, from your government. From the Cascades coated paper plant in Thunder Bay throwing 375 people out of work at Christmas, to the massive layoffs announced at General Motors affecting 4,000 direct jobs and who knows how many more indirect jobs, our manufacturing sector has been dealt a body blow on your watch.

The Premier refused to say anything meaningful to these families, so I'll ask you: What specifically has your government done and have you done as Minister of Finance, Acting Premier, since you heard about the General Motors and Cascades layoffs? What have you done for these families and these communities?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Our government implemented the automotive investment strategy in advance. We anticipated challenges for the sector, and have invested half a billion dollars that has leveraged \$5 billion in new investment. No government, I would argue, in the history of this—and by the way, your party opposed that. You opposed assisting the auto industry. You refused to do it. You refused to listen to the automotive industry. Those have protected 18,000 existing jobs and have helped produce an additional 1,800 jobs. Overall, since assuming office, 214,000 new jobs have been created in Ontario.

As long as one person loses their job in Ontario, we're concerned and we will work with them. As long as one family is concerned about their future, this government will continue along the path it has to protect existing jobs and to create new jobs in a way that has never been done in the history of Ontario, certainly not by that party that

neither understood nor responded to the concerns of working people—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Tory: In shorter words, the answer for Thunder Bay and Oshawa and St. Catharines is “nothing.” It’s clear that the government has no plan to deal with the 42,000 and counting manufacturing job losses over the past year in Ontario.

Today we can add to this list 47 employees at Ciena Corp. in Kanata, Ontario. ABB Manufacturing in Guelph, the last large power transformer manufacturer in Ontario, will close its doors, throwing almost 300 people out of work on January 31, 2006—not a great way to start the new year. AFG Glass had factories in Concord and London until this year and employed 250 people. Now those men and women are looking for work.

Minister, to say, “Don’t worry; be happy; the economy is fine,” is not good enough for these people. Do what the Premier would not do and stand up in your place and tell us what specifically you are doing for these people in these communities, these families who are losing jobs this week and this year on your watch.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I remind the member opposite that you voted against the automotive investment plan and the strategy to protect those jobs. You voted against it; all of you, every one of you. Unlike the member opposite, the Premier has met with the chairs of all the big automotive manufacturers. Unlike the member opposite, the Premier has been engaged in discussions with the CAW, both at the national level and just yesterday when the Premier spoke with the president of the Oshawa General Motors CAW local.

Let me say what other people have said. Unlike the member opposite, the president of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers’ Association said, “It’s not all doom and gloom. Canada’s still doing reasonably well.” RBC Financial: Manufacturers “continue to drive a positive, middle-of-the-pack growth pace for Ontario.” The Conference Board of Canada: “Led by strengthening consumer spending and continued strength, Ontario’s domestic economy will post solid growth this year and next year.”

By the way, the member for Durham, Mr. O’Toole, said this yesterday, speaking about the job losses in his riding: “It’s changing. Globalization is changing it, not Dalton McGuinty, essentially, any more than anyone else.” The member is right.

This government cares about working people. Unlike the member opposite, we’ll continue—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question this time is to the Minister of Transportation. You have publicly stated, on more than one occasion, your disappointment that the 407 ETR owners can continue to deny people their licence plates. Minister, my question’s

a simple one: Who gives the 407 ETR the names and addresses of licence plate owners?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I have said on more than one occasion in this House—and outside this House—that the 407 is a bad contract. It was a 99-year lease, now 93 years, and our government has done everything in its power to make this contract better for Ontarians and the people who drive on this highway.

There’s no question that the terms of the contract that the previous government gave provide the 407 with the ability to deny plates. That is exactly the reason we were fighting for this, and we’ll continue fighting for the people, and that’s why we have appealed this decision.

Mr. Prue: Minister, you didn’t answer the question, but I think you do know the answer. It’s your ministry that hands over these details; it is your ministry that turns over the personal information from the motor vehicle registry database to the 407 ETR so that they, in turn, can turn around and deny Ontarians their licence plates. You said just a couple of weeks ago in the *National Post*, “Denying someone the right to renew their licence plates significantly affects their ability to drive, and that is very serious.”

My question to you is a simple one, again: If you think it’s wrong, why don’t you simply stop telling the 407 ETR and their collection agency, Canadian Bonded Credit Ltd., who owns the licence plate? Alberta had the guts to do it. Why don’t you?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: This was a decision made by the court. The court said that we have to start denying the plates based on the contract that the previous government signed. We have appealed their decision. I always said that it causes inconvenience to the people, and the previous government should not have given this kind of right or these kinds of privileges to any party, but our hands, to a certain extent, are tied, based on the contract that the previous government created. We will still continue to fight for the rights of the drivers and the privileges of the people of Ontario, and we will do our level best.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, Ontario’s workers are among the best in Canada and respected around the world. Ontario, like all jurisdictions in North America, must compete globally, and our workers must be given every opportunity to upgrade their skills to support a robust economy here in Ontario.

Yesterday morning at George Brown College, you signed a labour market partnership agreement with federal Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Belinda Stronach.

Minister, could you tell this House and all Ontarians what this will do for our economy and our Ontario workers?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to thank the member from Ottawa—Orléans for his advocacy on behalf of the workers in his riding and for recognizing the opportunities that these agreements represent.

For almost 10 years, the people of this province were denied the opportunities from a labour market development agreement because a previous government decided it wasn't important. And yes, there were elections during that period in 1997 and 2000, but they couldn't deliver. Premier Dalton McGuinty took a stand and delivered for the people of this province. What did he deliver? He delivered the opportunity to develop a one-stop training system for all the workers in this province, and through the labour market partnership agreement, he delivered an extra \$1.368 billion over six years for new apprenticeships, extra workplace skills development and new integration programs for new immigrants, a great deal for the people of Ontario and for the people of Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. McNeely: We have all heard and know about the needs of new Ontarians in their attempts to find work suitable for their training and education. Our government has been working hard to meet the needs of our skilled workers. On top of that, our government has been working to increase the number of homegrown skilled workers through a number of new apprenticeships and skills training programs. Not only does this benefit our economy, but it gives our youth new opportunities to become engaged in successful and rewarding career paths.

Minister, can you give us an outline of what these programs are, and how they benefit our youth and all of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: There are a number of programs that we use at the moment. First of all, you want to encourage people at a very early stage to look at the opportunities that, for example, the trades present. That's the Ontario youth apprenticeship program. Just this week, we announced an enhancement to the funding. Already, 20,500 young people take advantage of that in high school. This is going to give us the opportunity for even more to take advantage in the future.

1510

For those who aren't connected to school, we've got the Job Connect program that helps 97,000 young people every year take a look at skills development and skills enhancement, whether it's sophisticated or whether it's basic literacy skills, to make sure they get connected to the job market.

Then we have programs such as the co-op diploma apprenticeship program, that will help people get an apprenticeship and a college diploma.

With the new labour market partnership agreement, we're going to have 1.3-billion-plus opportunities in the future for more work—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question?

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener—Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. On October 25, you said that there were currently no proposals for drug consumption sites before any municipality in Ontario. We know that just such a proposal is making its way through the machinery at city hall in Toronto as we speak. We also know that Ottawa is considering a similar plan. Minister, do you care to correct the record?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think you should correct the record. I know that the city of Toronto endorsed their drug strategy the other day, unanimously as I understand it. But if the honourable member looks at the language with respect to the spectre of consumption sites, she'll see that the city is only at the very, very earliest stages of giving any consideration. What I said to the honourable member from Leeds—Grenville in answer to his question, and I believe in media scrums as well, was that the province of Ontario is not in receipt of any proposal for such. The question was asked in the context of, "Would we be offering funding?" I said no. You can say all that you want, that the government of Canada may be considering this, but in order for any consumption site to come to use, to come to life, it has to be licensed by the government of Canada. My points remain entirely accurate. I'm aware that there's some discussion going on at the city of Toronto, but there is no proposal being advanced by any municipality in the province of Ontario, including the city of Toronto. I'm very accurate on that, I believe.

Mrs. Witmer: Minister, in response, you also said that there were no public health dollars involved in this. Yet if you take a look at the 2006 operating budget submission of Toronto Public Health, they are requesting \$249,500 for their comprehensive drug strategy. It falls under the category of service enhancements that will be funded 65% by the province. You are pleading ignorance, but the board of health, if they get their way, is going to be paying for safe houses for drug users with provincial funding. Yet you won't pay for physiotherapists, optometrists or chiropractors. You do have the power under the regulations of the Health Protection and Promotion Act to put an end to this. Are you prepared to act today? Will you set the record straight?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member suggested that I was somehow misinformed. It is she who is misinformed. She asked me to stand in my place today and put out the fire of a conversation that the city of Toronto, in a report that they just endorsed, is going to have. They've said in their report, "We're going to have a conversation." Larry Campbell, the former mayor of Vancouver, came in and said, "This is the kind of thing that it's important to talk about." I'm on record personally. I've said very clearly that my awareness of the drug culture differential between Toronto and Vancouver leads me to believe that there is no cause for it. That's my personal view. But the reality is that the honourable member asked me to stop a conversation that is taking

place in the city of Toronto. It's an appropriate conversation for them to have.

The honourable member seeks to create the impression that there are provincial dollars behind safe consumption sites. She is wrong on that, because there are no safe consumption sites. Accordingly, there are no—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question?

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I have a question for the Minister of Health. You may have heard that today Toronto's medical officer of health released the Toronto pandemic influenza plan. The medical officer of health has requested help from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, including building surge capacity in all components of the health care system. Most public health units don't even have the resources to complete core responsibilities like inspecting restaurants, let alone dealing with a pandemic. Will you commit today to provide the funding necessary so that Toronto Public Health has the tools it needs to protect people from a pandemic?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member seeks to eliminate confidence among Ontarians by trying to pretend we've got some public health apparatus in our province that's feeble. This is an impression that it is irresponsible to suggest. It has been made stronger by the investment of hundreds of millions of dollars of resources from our government as part of Operation Health Protection. We're working on a number of areas, including toward the creation of a public health agency in Ontario.

Ontario's pandemic flu plan has been updated regularly. It's available for people to take a look at on our government's Web site. Alongside that, people can easily find that our government has been very active in implementing the recommendations that came from the reports of Naylor, Walker and Campbell. The point is that Toronto Public Health is functioning in a much greater way than it ever has before. It has responded well to recent crises, and some evidence of the expansion in funding for them has been their recent budget proposal to increase their staff by 326 people.

Ms. Churley: I'm honestly surprised by that answer. I would say to the health minister that it's irresponsible of him to ignore these dire warnings. The Ontario Medical Association says that Ontario is not prepared for a pandemic because the McGuinty government has underfunded public health, because local public health units don't have the resources for basic tasks, and because we don't have enough local medical officers of health.

The OMA says, "Our public health system is broken. It remains unprepared for challenges we know it must meet." Toronto Public Health says it needs support from you for surge capacity so it can guard against pandemics. Will you commit today to funding public health properly

so it has the tools it needs to protect people from pandemics?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member, in her apparent lack of research, confuses the issue of public health capacity with surge capacity, which is not in the public health apparatus but rather in all other elements of the health care system. Then she goes on to attribute comments that were not part of the Ontario Medical Association's—

Ms. Churley: I was there; you weren't.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: —oh, here we go—report to them.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Mr. Speaker, I didn't call her a rascal.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Minister.

Hon. George Smitherman: I think we acknowledge that we've got to continue to do more to enhance our preparedness with respect to pandemics. We're behaving very prudently in that fashion. We've got terrific leadership. I think our record with respect to public health stands in very stark contrast to yours, because like on so many issues with your dance partners alongside you, there are two parties in this Legislature that have cut funding for public health: not the Liberal Party, just those parties.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I regularly meet with families of individuals with developmental disabilities in my riding of Nipissing. I also have just recently met with Laura Pearce, executive director of the Mattawa Community Living Association, and I know of the great work she is doing in the Mattawa area. I continue to enjoy a great working relationship with Ray Thorne, executive director of the North Bay and District Association for Community Living, whose office is right next to mine on Main Street in North Bay.

They know as well as I that having capable, highly trained support staff active in the lives of our children with developmental disabilities goes a long way toward reducing the barriers that can impede opportunities for social inclusion and a high quality of life. We know that caregivers and professionals in the developmental services sector work incredibly hard at their jobs, and we appreciate them for that. I want to take this opportunity to thank those in my community who are working so hard.

Minister, how is your ministry helping to promote the developmental services sector to those interested students who wish to work with clients living with developmental disabilities?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate the question from our member from the north. Let me say, first, how much we—all of us in

this House, every MPP—recognize and support the work people do in the developmental services sector.

Let me say very clearly that this month we launched something that is very important for this sector. Let me tell you about it today. We've recently launched the first part of a comprehensive plan to strengthen specialized care for individuals with developmental disabilities, some of whom have the highest care needs. Starting this year, up to 20 college and university students in designated clinical disciplines are eligible for up to \$4,500 each in financial support through the Ontario developmental services career connections grant. This is important. The Ontario developmental services career connections grant provides up to \$4,500 in financial support for students in the practicum component of their—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Smith: I'd like to acknowledge that I don't have the special skills of the member for Toronto—Danforth. They will be missed in this House in the not-too-distant future.

I'm pleased to hear from the minister about this new grant program. It certainly is going some way to addressing the concerns surrounding support staff retention, which is a real concern for parents, and particularly for the elderly parents who worry about what will happen to their child, should they as parents not be around later in life to provide the necessary care for that child. I'm sure the minister would agree that even more can be done to ensure that adults with developmental disabilities are not kept to the margins of society.

Minister, can you explain to this House how our government is ensuring that Ontario's support system remains sustainable in the long term?

1520

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I know that this member has watched carefully the many announcements we've made in the developmental services sector. Let me just highlight one very important one, because it is often a concern, where parents will say, "What happens when I die? What will be left for my child with a developmental disability?" and a very particular need for people with very high needs. One of our announcements, a \$41-million announcement, focused on specialized care: four networks of specialized care specifically addressing the coordination of services that must be available for people with very high needs. That announcement also includes living places for people with very high needs. In addition to that, we have seen over \$200 million in total coming out in the very near future. It has already started in the last two years. We're very happy about the moves we're making, but in particular the transformation of the system, the policy work—

The Speaker: Thank you.

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. You will know that the

first phase of the York region Viva transit project is now complete, fully implemented, and we're ready to move into phase 2 of that important project. Since May of this year—I asked you a question on May 18 about funding for phase 2—repeated requests to your office and to you personally to get some indication of a commitment for funding for phase 2 have been met with silence. We are now at the point where this entire project is at risk because York region needs your commitment for the \$7.3 million.

Minister, I'm going to ask you now, could you stand in your place and make this commitment to York region so that they can get on with the planning for the important phase 2 of this project?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the member for asking me the question. I have been to York region about three or four times with regard to Viva announcements and I'm very proud of the work they have done. They have done some excellent work.

Let me just say what our government has done on the transit field. Our budget for transit is \$800 million this year, which is a record investment that any government has ever made in transit. This is in addition to the gas tax money that we have promised to the municipalities. We started with one cent, we are giving them one and a half cents this year, and it will go to two cents. So we are providing very stable funding to transit. I know that the project that Viva has, even their second phase, is a very worthwhile project. I always said that we will look at the proposal they submit and we will work with them.

Mr. Klees: The minister has been looking at this project since May. That's six months of looking. York region now needs the commitment. It's crunch time. I know that gridlock isn't important to the minister, because his party pays for airplanes to put important people like the Premier into, to move from Hamilton to Toronto—68 kilometres. People in York region can't get on an airplane to travel across the gridlock. We need transit.

So the question is, will you stop looking? You know what the project looks like. You've said it's important and worthwhile. York region needs your commitment to fund phase 2, at \$7.3 million. Would you tell me now, would you tell the people in York region, when can they expect that commitment?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me say this: The previous government never put any money into transit—never. The honourable member on the other side was also the Minister of Transportation. He was very much aware of what needed to be done in York. I would really like to know how much money he approved when he was a Minister of Transportation and what kind of commitments he had. Since then, we have funded the first phase and we are willing to work with them on the second phase. We have an \$800-million investment that we are making that the previous government didn't make.

Mr. Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The minister is absolutely wrong in his response—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): That's not a point of order, and you know that.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): He's warned now.

I have a question for the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment. It's a year and a half since the McGuinty government posted its proposed Drinking Water Source Protection Act on the Environmental Bill of Rights. At the time of the posting, the then Minister of the Environment stated she hoped to introduce the final bill later in the year. That was 2004. Then legislation was promised in the spring session of 2005, but still nothing. Source waters are being contaminated and permanently impacted daily. Will you stop the stalling and introduce the government's long-promised Drinking Water Source Protection Act today?

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Minister—parliamentary assistant?

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): Thank you for correcting that, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the question from the member, who's on her feet a lot today—perhaps not in the future, but at least today. I just want to assure the member that the McGuinty government has a commitment to the first recommendation of Justice O'Connor, which was to introduce sweeping cross-provincial source water protection legislation. That's what Justice O'Connor said we should do.

Unlike the previous government, which rolled out things without enough consultation and planning, we have taken the time to make sure we get this right. I know that my minister is looking forward to being back in this House to introduce source water protection legislation. I know that will be a wonderful day for the people of Ontario, because it will make a commitment that we campaigned on a reality in this House. I know that all the members will be looking at that important piece of legislation and working with us to make sure that we get it right.

Ms. Churley: I want to assure the member that I will always be on my feet; I'll probably die on my feet.

I want to say to the member, each day York region's big pipe will rob the Rouge watershed of twice the volume of the main branch of the Rouge River north of Steeles. Consequently, the dewatering of the Rouge watershed will continue forever. Despite opposition to the big pipe from citizens, environmental groups, the city of Toronto and even the government's own Environmental Commissioner, the McGuinty government still approves it. This is the real record of the McGuinty government on source water protection. If you are serious about source water protection, will you issue a stop order immediately and end your big pipe madness today?

Mr. Wilkinson: I find it interesting that the member, who back in the 1990s was talking about source water protection when she was in government, actually never

did anything. And now she's in here and she's specifically asking a question about the pipe. That has been a long-standing process. I think the most important thing that we have to remember is that our ministry is very concerned about that situation. We're reviewing it. We continue to scrutinize construction activity. The work that's going on right now has some 40 conditions imposed by the Ministry of the Environment because we take the protection of our environment, for our children and for our grandchildren, very seriously. It's important that the growth that was approved in 1994 for York region when you were in government, which is underpinned by the importance to have the public infrastructure that was never completed by the previous government, who were so busy cutting taxes that we ended up with a huge infrastructure deficit—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question?

1530

HEALTH PROMOTION

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. Just by way of preface, I want to relay a quick story.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Ms. Mossop: Yes, hear, hear. The home of John Wilkinson.

I heard about the students at Stratford Northwestern Public School, who are regularly eating at a little innovative café called the Screaming Avocado. This of course is going to be of interest to our Minister of Health Promotion because this is a place where they make very healthful foods from scratch. Actually, when the students are there, they can learn a little bit about nutrition and how to make foods and all the rest, which is very good because, as you know, our government has banned junk food in schools. We all know that this is part of what's necessary to instill this awareness, not only in our youth but also in all Ontarians, if we're going to get a handle on health care. But I need to know from our Minister of Health Promotion what other kinds of programs we are providing our youth—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Minister?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I want to thank the honourable member because I too had the opportunity to meet some of the people involved with that innovative café called the Screaming Avocado. What we're trying to do within the Ministry of Health Promotion is take a holistic approach to some of the challenges facing young people in particular. Stats Canada reported that over the last 25 years, there has been a 300% increase in obesity rates amongst children. That is going to have tremendous repercussions for the health care system down the line, in terms of type 2 diabetes and so on.

We're taking a holistic approach. I was pleased to co-announce with my colleague the Minister of Education

the 20 minutes of physical activity that's going to be mandatory in schools. My colleague Mary Anne Chambers doubled the amount of the student nutrition program to \$8.5 million. All of these programs in whole are aimed at teaching young people the importance of nutrition in the school system.

Ms. Mossop: Also, just moving on now from the eating aspect into the exercise aspects, our government started the Active 2010 initiative and the introduction of 20 minutes of physical activity in our schools on top of a lot of gym time. Actually, I'm thinking this is something we should move into Queen's Park now. I think we need a mandatory 20 minutes of exercise every day at Queen's Park. I don't know about anybody else here, but I'm spending a lot of time sitting around in committee meetings. Here in the Legislature, we sit and sit. The only exercise we're getting is our jaws and maybe our thumbs on our BlackBerries. I think we could use the 20 minutes of exercise here. Those cookies they serve in the committee meetings aren't helping, either, let me tell you. Minister, we've got to have a change there. The only exercise we're getting is jogging down the halls when the bells start ringing.

Anyway, my point is that I'd like to hear from the minister a little bit more about what we're doing in the area of active lifestyles.

Hon. Mr. Watson: One component of our plan is called Active 2010. I have big running shoes to fill in Jim Bradley, who launched that program for us. It's aiming to get the number of Ontario adults who consider themselves physically active from 48% to 55% by the year 2010.

We also have the communities in action fund, which is a very innovative program that is giving small grants to recreational programs throughout the province of Ontario. We've announced a number of these programs. I'm pleased that in the next two weeks, we're going to be announcing a whole series of other community in action fund programs. These are the kinds of grants that provide the seed money for organizations to get up and running, whether it's a small basketball league or for a scout or a guide organization—

The Speaker: Thank you. Government House leader?

DEATH OF CANADIAN SOLDIER

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I have unfortunate news. A Canadian soldier serving in Afghanistan was killed and four others injured in a vehicle accident today. In my capacity as government House leader and at the request as well of Bob Runciman, the House leader of the official opposition, and Gilles Bisson, the whip of the third party, I would ask that members of the Legislature rise for a moment of silence in memory of this individual.

The House observed a moment's silence.

PETITIONS

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):

“Recommendations for the Frost Centre.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government announced the closure of the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre in July 2004 with no public consultation; and

“Whereas public outrage over the closure of the Frost Centre caused the government to appoint a working committee of local residents to examine options for the future of the property; and

“Whereas the working committee has completed their consultations and has prepared recommendations for the provincial government that include a procedure to follow during the request for proposals process; and

“Whereas the Frost Centre has been an important educational resource for the community, and continued use of the facility for educational purposes has widespread support;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should retain public ownership of the Frost Centre lands and follow the recommendations of the working committee regarding the request for proposals process.”

It's signed by hundreds of people from my riding.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions about the dilapidated bridge near Old Weston Road and St. Clair Avenue. The petition is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario, the minister of infrastructure services and the Minister of Transportation, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas GO Transit is presently planning to tunnel an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West and west of Old Weston Road, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing;

“Whereas the TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair Avenue–Old Weston Road bridge;

“Whereas this bridge (underpass) will be: (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will have only one lane for traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians.... It's dark and slopes on both east and west sides creating high banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. (This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West, thus

eliminating this eyesore ... with its high banks and blank walls. Instead it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow."

Since I agree with this petition 100%, I'm delighted to sign it as well.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have another petition similar to the ones that have been coming forward.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I affix my signature as I agree with it.

1540

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I am pleased to enter this petition from Mr. Al Moreland, president of Community Living St. Catharines. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I'm pleased to sign this in my support.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I affix my name in support.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I've got a petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

"There are numerous reasons for rescinding the joint board decision including the following:

"Whereas the decision contravenes the purpose of the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act;

"Whereas the decision sets precedent for quarry expansion licences on the Niagara Escarpment;

"Whereas this decision could lead to habitat destruction for species of concern;

"Whereas escarpment rural lands are equivalent to buffer designation under the United Nations' framework for biosphere reserve...;

"Whereas to attempt to maintain the significant wetlands and the streams course water will have to be pumped in perpetuity;

"Whereas this decision allows for pumping 50 feet ... below the water table;

"Whereas the 50-foot dams to be constructed have a potential for failure;

"Whereas aggregate can be readily accessed close to market off the Niagara Escarpment in land that is not protected or at risk;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario to:

"Issue an order by the Lieutenant Governor in Council ... rescinding the decision made by the joint board dated June 8, 2005, approving the applications of Dufferin Aggregates in regards to this matter;

"Issue an order by the cabinet substituting for the decision of the board on this matter, a decision rejecting the applications of Dufferin."

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I have a petition here:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

"Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

"Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

"Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy drugs while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the" important "needs of patients."

As I agree with the spirit of this petition, I affix my signature to it.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many owners of seasonal trailers kept at campgrounds have raised their concerns over the impact of property taxes on seasonal trailers and the unfairness of imposing a new tax on persons who use minimal municipal services;

"Whereas this new tax will discourage businesses and tourism opportunities in Ontario and will cause many families to give up their vacation trailers altogether;

"Whereas the administration of this tax will require a substantial investment in staff, time and resources across the province of Ontario;

"Whereas some representatives of the recreational vehicle industry, campground proprietors and trailer owners have suggested an alternative sticker or tag system to establish fees for seasonal trailers;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario immediately abandon the assessment and taxation of recreational trailers used on a seasonal bases in 2004; and that the government of Ontario consult with all stakeholders regarding the development of a fair and reasonable sticker or tag fee that would apply to recreational trailers used on a seasonal basis."

I affix my name in support.

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to introduce the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan does not cover the cost of PSA (prostate specific antigen) test as an early method of detection for prostate cancer in men;

"Whereas mammogram tests for women are fully covered by the Ontario insurance plan for early detection of breast cancer and the PSA test for men is only covered once the physician suspects prostate cancer,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We support Bill 201. We believe PSA testing should be covered as an insured service by the Ontario health insurance program. Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Canadian men. At least one in every eight Canadian men is expected to develop the disease in their lifetime. Some five million Canadian men are currently at risk in their prostate-cancer-risk years, which are between the ages of 45 and 70. For many seniors and low-income earners, the cost of the test would buy up to a week's worth of groceries for some individuals."

I'm pleased to support this petition and affix my signature to it.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock):
"Highway 35 four-laning

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35, and that expansion has been put on hold by the McGuinty government; and

"Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton; and

"Whereas the final round of public consultation has just been rescheduled;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the final public consultation."

Thank you to all the businesses in my riding that have been gathering signatures for this.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to introduce the following petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance plan."

I'm pleased to sign this petition to show my support.

1550

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have yet another petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I affix my name in support.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): The following petitioners have decided to place my name on this petition, Mr. Speaker. I hope you don't mind if I read it with my name included.

It's a petition to the Parliament of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the so-called Tenant Protection Act ... has allowed landlords to increase rents well above the rate of inflation...;

"Whereas the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal created by this act awards major and permanent additional rent increases to landlords to pay for required one-time improvements and temporary increases in utility costs;

"Whereas the same act has given landlords wide-ranging powers to evict tenants;...

"Whereas our own MPP, Liberal Tony Ruprecht, called for a rent ... reduction at a public event in June" 2005;

"We, the undersigned residents of Doversquare Apartments in Toronto, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:...

"To shut down the notoriously pro-landlord Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal;

"To abrogate the Tenant Protection Act and to draw up new landlord-tenant legislation in consultation with tenant and housing rights campaigners."

I'll present the petition to our page, who is actually from Davenport. Thank you very much.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader):

On a point of order, Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 55, I wish to rise to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, November 28, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 27, Family Statute Law Amendment Act, and in the evening, second reading of Bill 16, the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act.

The afternoon of Tuesday, November 29, will be confirmed. In the evening, second reading of Bill 18, Budget Measures Act, 2005 (No. 2).

On Wednesday, November 30, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 21, Energy Conservation Responsibility Act.

On Thursday, December 1, afternoon and evening to be confirmed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2005 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2005

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (N° 2)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 22, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 18, An Act to implement 2005 Budget measures and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 18, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2005 et modifiant diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): On the last occasion I was here and spoke for some 18 or 19

minutes. Just to recap in a minute or so, for those who were not here or those tuning in for the first time on television, I talked about this act, Bill 18. It's kind of a strange little act. It is a compendium. It is An Act to implement 2005 Budget measures in a whole bunch of arcane ways, something that I think most citizens would find rather tedious and boring and wouldn't understand why we're even debating it at all.

I have to tell you, when I first read it, that there were a number of very funny things in here—the community small business investment fund, which is not funny, because that's taking away tax credits for investments in labour-sponsored investment funds. They're being phased out. There is no rationale given by the government, as I said in the speech, for doing this because in fact this is the only opportunity that many people of modest income and modest means have to actually invest in the province and in some very helpful projects that these labour investment funds have done in the past: things like building public housing and building infrastructure in communities where the labour investments are used. They're being phased out. There's no rationale for this at all. I'm at a complete loss as to why the government thinks this needs to be done.

I went into some of the others, though. The Electricity Act: Here's an example of one of the things that this act purports to do. The owner of a hydroelectric generating station located in an unorganized territory without a school board pays taxes to the province and not to the financial corporation. I guess it's just bypassing the financial corporation, which in the past sent it to the province. Now they have to pay it direct. I don't know the rationale for this. Certainly no government member spoke of this at the outset.

We have the Gasoline Tax Act. It did everything except lower the price of gasoline, which I think is what consumers were hoping you would do, or regulate it so we don't have the spikes we had all last summer. I think that's what they were hoping, but that's not in there at all. It's just something about whether the gas is clear or not clear.

We have the Securities Act, which gives the securities organization the opportunity to make its own rules. The committee that was set up, of which I was a member, the finance committee that studied this, said that the Legislature should be making those rules. I fail to understand how you can have an enforcer, an adjudication branch—which is not separated and has not done so—make their own rules. That will certainly not have the securities well looked upon by those people who feel they have been wronged by the system.

We have the Tobacco Tax Act, which I think is one of the most arcane things I have ever read. I read it in because, even after you read it and reread it and read it again, I don't think any rational person would have a clue what the government is trying to do with that.

Last but not least is the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation Act. I can't see how that is possibly a

budget measure. It allows an elected person from the city of Toronto to sit on the board, because currently—

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Do you oppose that?

Mr. Prue: No, I'm not saying I oppose it; it's just not a budget measure.

Here it is. It allows an elected person from the city and an elected person from the province to sit on the board, because heretofore they were not allowed to sit on the board. I'm not opposed to them sitting on the board, but I don't think it's much of a budget measure. It has nothing to do with what was contained in the budget of Ontario. In fact, the budget of Ontario was a really bad, mean-spirited, limiting budget. It did not do what the people of Ontario, and particularly its poorest citizens, had hoped it was going to do. This is, after all, an act to implement the budget measures. It describes in some detail the little, tiny nuances in the budget that the government wants to do, having come down with a sledgehammer against many people who had hoped that times would be better.

I'd like to return to that budget. It was a flawed budget. I have spoken in this Legislature on numerous occasions as to why it was flawed. It was flawed because it didn't do anything for the poorest of the poor. It was flawed because there was no extra money for housing. It was flawed because people on ODSP and people on general welfare did not get the monies they need. It was flawed because it did not end the clawback. It didn't do anything about the clawback, which you had promised to remove. It was flawed in every single social aspect that I can think of.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the housing portion of what was not in that budget and what is not contained in Bill 18. It seems that the Liberals of Ontario—this government—are allowing the federal government to give money; the municipalities seem to be matching the dollars; but there is very little by way of a budget for housing in Ontario. This province is doing virtually nothing. I've said this to the minister on numerous occasions, and I'll stand up and say it again today: This province is doing virtually nothing when it comes to building affordable and supportive housing in Ontario. When I've asked the minister in this House how many housing units are being built, I get all kinds of answers—5,000, 8,000, 9,000—the plans they have, the announcements upon reannouncements. But we know that in 2003, the first year this government was in place, there were some 20 housing units built, in 2004 there were another 20-something housing units built, and, when we ask how many are being built, we get thousands upon thousands.

I have to tell you, I was very impressed in this House the other day when a government backbencher stood up and wanted to know how many housing units have actually been built and occupied since this government came to power. The figure that was given by the minister on that date, and we're going to try to verify it, was that 893 housing units have actually been built, but they're not all occupied yet. This is in a city like Toronto, where

there are 75,000 families on the waiting list, and you've built 893 for the whole province. I have to tell you, I think that's bad.

1600

Yesterday, I put the question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing about the housing stock that is in the city of Toronto, the deplorable state of the housing stock that is here and how much money is in the budget this year for the repairs to that horrible housing stock. Of course, in this budget, not one red cent has been committed to that. In this budget, there is nothing and no hope for the people who live in subsidized and assisted housing in Toronto. I know the housing stock elsewhere in Ontario may be bad, but the city of Toronto has come forward and asked this government to make good on rebuilding the deplorable state of public housing in Ontario.

The former government did something I still decry to this day, so I'm going to get off the Liberals for just a minute and talk about the former government. They downloaded all that housing stock to the municipalities of Ontario, municipalities that at that time had neither the money nor, in some cases, the expertise to look after it. They downloaded it as is, having spent generally no money on repairs and no money on upkeep for the eight previous years. It was—if I can use the word, Mr. Speaker—a dastardly act. It was an act that was going to condemn people who live in poverty to live in squalor. What has happened is that these homes have been sent down to the city of Toronto, and \$244 million is needed to bring them up to code. Not even a penny of that \$244 million is contained in this budget of which we are speaking today.

For the last two nights, and for three days as well—as much time as I could get there—I have spent my nights and my time in the Jane-Finch community, or, as they'd like to call it, the 218. I went there and talked to the people who live there. I lived with them, I ate with them, I drank coffee with them, I met with them, and I went on a tour with them. I want to tell you that I have nothing but the greatest of respect for that community, and I have nothing but the greatest of respect for the people who live there. They are hard-working, they are decent, and they want to do the best for their children. They are like every other person in Ontario. But you know, they have something they cannot get around, which they do not have the money for, and that is the deplorable state and condition of the housing that we as a province have left to them and which the city cannot maintain.

One of them opined to me, and I think she was right, that we have a responsibility here in Ontario because, after all, we are the landlord, and if we are content to leave their housing in the deplorable condition it is in, we are no better than slum landlords. Do you know something? She was right. We are in fact slum landlords for what we have done to that community.

I am mindful as well, because I read the Hansard, although I was not in the room at the time, that the member for York West stood up and was scornful of me,

and said that I had been scornful of his community. I am not scornful of his community; I am there trying to assist his community. When I asked the question of those same people last night and today, about whether or not I had somehow maligned them by saying that they lived in deplorable conditions, or that I had maligned them by saying that the carpets in the halls and the public access ways were dirty, or if I had maligned them by saying that there was no shower in the apartment they had given me and that another family will move into, starting tomorrow, or if I had maligned them by saying that there were cockroaches and mice, they said no; I had not maligned them. What I had done was something that very few politicians have generally done, and that is go in there, see it and stand up here and tell the truth of the conditions under which they live.

I promised I would come back here and talk about it again today, and I intend to. These people live in difficult and trying conditions, generally through no fault of their own. The only public housing they can afford is old, it is decrepit, and it has not been kept up to standard. In fact, it is the only place they can afford to live because it is on rent-gear-to-income. These are people who are, in many cases, on Ontario Works or ODSP, and in many cases are the working poor who make \$7.50 or \$8 an hour, which is not enough to afford standard rents in a city like Toronto.

They took me around this morning, along with Marilyn Churley, my colleague. We went around, throughout all those pathways, as they call them: Needle Firway and all those romantic names that one can find in North York. They took us around and we saw decrepit windows that were in some cases not there, with cardboard in them. We saw that they were leaking, in many cases, and on a first cold night already had the signs of frost and icicles hanging from them and were already starting to bleed on to the sills inside. We saw doors that had holes in them. We saw doors that had been kicked in. We saw damage done up and down the stairways and in the sills. We saw damage in the apartments that had been vacated. We saw graffiti on the walls from all the gangs. I'm not an expert on gangs, and I started to ask, "What does this mean?" It was explained to me that the gang puts their signature there and, if it's not challenged, that's their building. If someone challenges it, there might be a fight outside, and maybe a shooting. That's what these good, generous and decent people live with: gang violence and people putting graffiti on their walls, claiming buildings as their own.

They took us into one apartment and I nearly jumped a mile because a mouse ran right close to me. I'm not generally afraid of mice, but I was absolutely shocked to see this mouse in broad daylight—it wasn't even dark—darting in and out from the garbage and what had been left behind in probably one of the most decrepit living conditions I have ever witnessed in my life. I thought I had seen a lot as the mayor of East York in some of the privately owned buildings that were in such disrepair that they were a disgrace to our community, but I want to tell you, I think this one was even worse.

I saw cockroaches—live ones, dead ones. I saw bars on the windows; people who bring up children have bars on their windows if they live on the first floor. They've asked to have them removed, but they will not be removed because there's no money to remove them, so people virtually live in prisons in their own home. I saw in those apartments 40-year-old fridges and 40-year-old stoves. This is from the same government that tells us to buy energy efficient appliances and says that this is one of their platforms. Do you know that the people in this facility, the people who live at 218, or at Jane-Finch, have 40-year-old fridges and stoves? I don't know how energy efficient that is.

They also have electric heat. That is the only way of heating it up to standard. They have all had baseboards. Because it's so poor and so shoddy, they have baseboards with electric heat, which the taxpayer ends up having to pay for—the most expensive form of heat possible. They have leaking pipes. They have problems I could not even imagine living with on a long-term basis.

I've said in this Legislature before, and I'll say it again today, I'm a boy from Regent Park. I'm a boy who grew up in public housing. In fact, I lived in public housing my entire life until the day I got married. That's where I lived; that's what I know. But I have never seen the state of shoddy condition that I saw today in that structure and in that development.

Those people are wonderful people. I also didn't see just depressing things. I saw people of indomitable spirit. I saw people who gave me hope. I saw people, youth, who had rebuilt the interlocking pathways and the whole centre of the community. They had laid it themselves with brand new interlocking bricks so that the kids had somewhere to play, to shoot some hoops, to meet, to gather, so that it looked nice. They rebuilt it themselves with no assistance from the Ontario government. I saw youth who were replastering the walls; again, not one penny of assistance from this government which says that it's committed to public housing, not one cent.

1610

I take my hat off to the city of Toronto, which is doing the best that they can. The city now has an imaginative plan where the contractors that they hire to do the repairs must hire the youth who live in and around the facility. You had youth who had heretofore looked at that facility sometimes as a place to damage, sometimes, in their frustration, as a place not to like. They were the ones who were actually doing the plastering and the painting and learning a trade. I was heartened by that. I thought, "What a wonderful thing."

This is a province that does, and has done, virtually nothing to assist the youth. We talk about gun violence in that community. We talk about the deprivation and what is drawing people into that kind of gun violence, where they take life with hardly a care, even at a funeral, and we wonder why that happens. I am suggesting that the members opposite, all of you, should take some time to go into these public housing units and see the deplorable condition under which people live and the despair that

they have. Those young men who I saw plastering the wall this morning are, in my opinion, not likely to be the ones who go out and buy a gun and take life and cause harm. It is those who live in despair, who don't have that opportunity, who are doing that. If this government truly believes that it wants to help, I would suggest that this is the area you should go in, and that the money you have not committed to housing in this budget should be spent there.

I saw youth who were working in teams on projects as mentors. These were young kids who got paid \$10 a day and a little bit of food, who were in training to help younger kids so that they don't go down into that cycle of despair and violence. They had hope in their eyes, hope that I hadn't seen before, and they were doing it on a shoestring. I asked them and the people who were there, and not one penny is being spent from the Ontario government. There was nothing in the budget to assist them in any way.

I went on, and I saw a York University student. There's a group of youth and York University students who publish a little newsletter that's handed out to the youth and the people of the community. It's just a little Jane-Finch news that you can open up and see some of the positive things that are happening in the community, because God knows you'll never see anything positive in the local media. You'll see violence and all the stuff that is portrayed of that community. There they are publishing a little newspaper. I asked, "Who funds it?" Nobody funds it. They do it themselves. Not one penny comes from this government, although we all talk about how we want to help that community and other communities who are in despair.

The minister from the United Church, whom I had seen many times on television, is doing a tremendous job in the food bank, in trying to organize the community and trying to reach out in a multicultural way. Although he is a United Church minister, he also gives hope and celebrates events like Kwanza, Eid and Diwali. This is a multicultural, multi-faith community, and they are there doing their best.

I asked him, "How much money do you get from the Ontario government? How much support do you get? How much support do you get around the housing initiatives or what you're doing in this community?" You know something? Sadly, with this budget, not one red cent is going in there. He's despairing, too, although I don't think that's a man who's likely to give up.

Probably the most remarkable person I met, though, was a woman. She's in charge of the rec centre. I don't think she has any formal training to do it, but what a personality, what a commitment to her community. She cooks the food, she gives the guidance, and she is like a mother to the kids. She has literally taken them out of the doorways, out of the sills and out of the places where they were getting in trouble, and she has given them a mission, some hope and some opportunity. She said—and rightly so—that they live constantly hoping that things will get better, that governments will listen, that

somebody will look at the despair, somebody will try to do something about it. They wait year after year after year, and nothing happens. The conditions get worse, the governments ignore it, and, I would suggest to you, you can't do it any more.

I asked the youth, when I was leaving—I sat down with two of them: "What is it you want me to do at the Legislature? Do you want me to go back and talk about the conditions under which you are living, or is the member from York West right, that I am maligning you somehow?" They told me that I need to stand up and say what I am saying today, to take this opportunity to do it, and to talk about housing and how housing needs to be in the budget. That's what I promised them I would do.

They said that they need to have a sense of hope, a sense that things are going to get better, or that so many of them from that community are going to go down the road to despair. They all know youth who have guns. They all know youth who have been kicked out of school. They all know youth and their friends who have been hassled, in their view, by the police. What they want is to have hope. They want a government to listen to what is there and to use the budget and the whole wealth of this province to say, "We can do something for the people of Jane-Finch."

The second thing they wanted was someone to stand up and fight for them. They said that their own politicians—be they at any level of government from that area—really don't do enough. They don't remember the last time that they have seen many of them. They don't remember the weeks or the years that have gone by that a politician has come to their community, to their meetings, to address their concerns and to try to fight for them at city hall or in the province, or in the federal government.

I promised them that I would use some of my time here today on this budget bill to talk to this government, to say that your budget bill is flawed. You've already passed Bill 197. You've already said that it's going to be the law. You've already stood up and congratulated yourself—and perhaps rightly so—in some areas that you've done in education, and perhaps rightly so in some areas around health. But I want to tell all of you: You have failed the people who live in public housing. You have failed them at Jane-Finch, you have failed them in Crescent Town, you have failed them in Flemingdon Park, and you have failed them wherever they live across this province, provided that you allow them to live in the conditions you allow them to live in, and provided that you accept that, as their landlord, you will allow that to continue.

The city of Toronto has some really good bylaw enforcement officers, as I'm sure does Ottawa, as I'm sure does Mississauga and Hamilton and every large city, and even some small ones who go out and look at the decrepit conditions of non-public housing, of private housing, and who make the landlords make the repairs and will not allow the conditions that I observed today to happen. But we have in the province of Ontario, through its down-

loading and through its neglect, places like Jane-Finch, like 218, where the kids live in despair.

I hope that I never open the paper again and see that a child has bought a gun and shot another child. We've seen it enough times this year. But I will tell you, I don't want to hear members opposite talk about, "How could this happen in our city? How could this happen in our province?" If you want to know how it happens, go and look at this place. Go and look when someone has no hope. Go and look when somebody has nowhere and nothing to turn to. Go and look when the only way they can hold their head up high and belong is to be in a gang because they've been kicked out of school. They don't have an education, they don't have a job, they don't have any future, they don't have anyone who will hire them. They go home to mice and cockroaches and filth every day, and the landlord allows it to happen. When you look at that, you'll know why most of these kids have a gun. I'm not saying it's the only reason but, boy, it's a big one.

1620

I'm asking members to do something about this. The city of Toronto has asked—I think rightly so, in this downloaded public housing frenzy that took place in the last government—that the province live up to its commitment. They have looked very carefully at the structural and necessary—not cosmetic—repairs to make it energy efficient. So that they can be sustained in the long-term, they need \$244 million. This budget has not one cent to go toward that.

I'm asking the members opposite to fight in your caucus the next time around to make sure there is \$244 million, that next March those young people have some hope and no despair, that next March that community knows someone listened, that next March that community can rightly be the kind of community of caring people they truly want to be. I don't want to leave them with no hope. I hope the members opposite are listening, and I'm very thankful I have not been heckled. I'm very thankful that most of you are hearing what is being said. I invite all of you to spend a couple of nights in that place or in another public housing development in your own constituency or one in Toronto, if you're here, during the Legislature. They would very gladly show you what it's like.

When I asked the minister yesterday if he would want his family to live there, he wouldn't answer, but I know he wouldn't. He wouldn't want his family to live like that, nor do the people who live there want their families to live like that. We have an obligation to do something. We can do something. Two hundred and forty-four million dollars is a lot of money. But kids shooting each other on the streets of our city is a lot more and a lot worse than spending it that way.

I've still got 12 minutes. I want to talk about other things in the budget as well, things that should have been or were not included in the budget, things like poverty and poor children. I've stood in this House the last two days and asked questions about that. I asked questions,

and I know my leader, Howard Hampton, asked questions, first of all, from the Ontario Association of Food Banks. Those questions were asked yesterday.

I didn't ask for a late show, because I don't really think that does much except allow for people to stand up and play the blame game. I listen to the ministers and the Premier whenever this issue of poverty is raised. It's always, "When you were in government..." Well, that was 15 years ago. I'm sure there were governments before the NDP that probably could be blamed too, or when they were in government.

That's probably the ultimate cop-out. Every time I hear it from over there, I cringe. I have to tell you that you are the government. You have a responsibility to look after the social and economic problems of this province. The people of Ontario vested that right in you. They vested that right in the 71 of you. In their wisdom, they determined that I should be one of your critics, and I take my critic responsibility well.

But I don't think the people of Ontario, and certainly the people who worry about poverty, the people who worry about housing, the people who worry about the less fortunate in our society and the people who worry about autistic kids, need to hear statements like, "When you were in government," or people going back 15 and 20 years to different economic circumstances, different times, before scientific breakthroughs in autistic research and all of the other things, and play a blame game. They are looking to you, quite frankly, for solutions. They are looking to you for a budget that won't be talking about whether there should be an elected person or not an elected person for a body that they don't know anything about. They're not looking, to you for arcane words, what some of these things mean around the tobacco tax. After having read it three and four times, I still can't figure it out, and there's been no explanation. They're not looking for the 23 schedules that are being changed. They are looking for real change. You promised it.

The people still live in hope. I suggest to you it's not too late. It's not too late for many of you, who I know are very proud Liberals, to go back to that very proud Liberal tradition. I remember it when I was a boy. I remember people like Lester Pearson, who had a proud Liberal tradition, who wanted to help. I remember Liberals in the House of Commons in the 1990s who voted unanimously to end child poverty. I remember Liberals in the federal government who put forward the child tax credit so that kids in Ontario and across the province wouldn't have their money clawed back. Then I see Liberals today who, quite frankly, in my view, are not much different from the Conservatives you replaced in many areas.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: Sometimes I go into despair. I listen when ministers say, "When you were in government," and all kinds of silly things. I close my eyes and I still hear Mike Harris. I don't want to hear that from a proud Liberal Party. You should not be saying those things. You should be standing up in caucus and you should be fighting with the executive cabinet committees, and you should be saying what you want in the

budget. What you should be wanting is in that whole area of social policy, which has been neglected for too long. We have people on welfare who did not get a raise for 11 years. They finally got one of 3%. Did I think it was enough? No. Did you think it was enough? I bet you didn't think it was enough either. I understand why you voted for it. I understand that was all the money there was in a first budget when you were \$5.6-billion in the hole and struggling to get out. At least it was something. At least there was some hope for the people on welfare and ODSP.

But this budget, the one we are talking about today: Not a penny went to those same people. Do you think inflation costs went down for them? Do you think the cost of energy went down for them? Do you think the cost of living went down or the cost of riding on the TTC or the cost of medicines they may have to buy for a sick child went down, or the food that they eat went down? I don't think so. But the money did not come for them to pay for it. There was nothing in this budget for the poorest of the poor. There was nothing for the 144,000 children in Ontario who have to go to the food bank to eat. The same is true of ODSP. There was nothing for them.

Three weeks ago, the minister, in her wisdom, announced that she was cutting off the opportunity that many people on welfare and ODSP were taking to go to their doctors and try to get a food supplement. The minister said that this was milking the system; the minister said that this was somehow wrong. I don't know whether it's wrong or right, but I don't blame people who subsist on less than \$10 a week to feed themselves for looking for some way to get some more money.

I ask all of you to think about \$10 and whether you could subsist on \$10. I don't think you could. I know I've tried twice. Twice I went on the welfare diet and both times, for \$10, I lost four pounds. That's what I lost in 10 days: four pounds each time because the food was not nutritious enough at a buck and a half a day. Meals had to be skipped and I often went hungry. That's what these people have. And they have the temerity, the unmitigated gall to go to their doctor and say, "I'm not getting enough food to eat," and the doctor, quite wisely, says, "I think you need more money for food. I think that you're sick. I think that you're going to get really bad if you don't get more money," and signs the chit. Lo and behold, this person is now eligible for the lordly sum of \$200 extra a month in order to feed themselves and their family. That's where the money goes, you know; it goes to food. And the minister has determined that this is somehow cheating the system.

What's cheating the system is the welfare rate, not the welfare recipient. The welfare rate cheats them because they cannot afford to live, they cannot afford to pay the rent, they cannot afford to put food on the table. They do what they need to do. I think the minister should rethink that. I know many people in the medical profession believe that these children and these people deserve a great deal better.

1630

The minister talked the other day about the housing allowances and all those things. Well, the housing allowances are few and far between. There was a 400-person pilot project that seems to be successful. There are a few housing developments, one in my own riding on Coxwell Avenue for those people who are psychiatric survivors, where they have their rent supplemented. Good idea; I don't think it's a bad idea. I'm sure that every single Liberal thinks it's a good idea—except there's nothing in the budget that's increasing it for this year. There's nothing in the budget that you're going to extend that to the 75,000 families who are waiting for housing, or to all the thousands of families who are on ODSP or general welfare. They need the money too. They need the rent supplement too. Surely you have to have some compassion for what their needs are. They need a rent supplement as well.

I had a constituent come into my office the other day. I had to tell her that I'm going to try to get her a rent supplement, but that it's going to be very difficult. This is a woman who is 57 years old and who three or four years ago found out she has MS. The MS is progressing pretty quickly; it's unfortunate. She was forced to go on ODSP. She lives in a basement apartment, and up until a few months ago was able to eke out an existence; I wouldn't want to say live well. She was able to eke out an existence on the \$900 a month that this government and the previous government gave her as an ODSP recipient with MS who is struggling. She walks with two canes and/or a walker or a wheelchair on occasion. She is struggling to make ends meet.

She's a smart woman. When she discovered she had MS she applied to go into a co-op. She applied for a very good co-op down on the Lakeshore. She put her name on the list. She had been there for 10 years on that list. After 10 years on the list, she has made it up to number seven and she has been told that it's going to be at least another four or five years for her to get into that co-op, if she is lucky. She has since applied for a great many more places, holding out hope for that co-op which will best suit her needs. I said, "You get \$900 a month. You can't afford any rent in the private market, unless we can get you a rent supplement."

I phoned around and my staff phoned around for a couple of days trying to get this woman a rent supplement. You know, she doesn't qualify. This government will not let her qualify. They will not allow the rules for her to get a rent supplement. If she had a rent supplement, a couple of wonderful things would happen. First of all, she would move out of the basement apartment, which I'm sure is far too small for her needs, but when she moves out of the basement apartment, ODSP will qualify her for a scooter so that she can actually travel the city and get around and do her own shopping instead of calling friends, neighbours and charitable organizations to do it. She will get the scooter, but she can't get the scooter until she lives in a place that's either on one floor

or has an elevator, because she's not eligible under this government to get that scooter.

I thought it was pretty simple: Let's get you a rent supplement. Let's get you off the waiting list, let's give you \$100, \$200, \$300, \$400 a month and get you into an apartment, any apartment you want with an elevator. Let's get you this and let's make sure your life is made as comfortable as possible with a debilitating disease like MS. We're still working on it. All I do, from the government ministries and from the government itself, is run into roadblocks. There's nothing in your budget that lets deserving people like this get a rent supplement. It has not been extended. There's no money because you have put no money in the budget.

I look at all the others. I'm not going to despair because I told those kids this morning and those people in Jane-Finch and 218 not to despair, that we need to keep fighting. I have spoken for nearly my entire hour. I have talked to you about what you need to do. I've talked to you about what's not in this budget. I'm asking all of you who are here to go back when the next budget round starts. It's going to start in January. I'm on the finance committee. We're going to travel. We're going to listen to people. I'm asking you to listen to them as well and find it in your heart of hearts, no matter what the deficit is, to find the monies necessary to make people's lives better. Give them some hope, lift them from squalor, give them some opportunity, like the woman with MS. If you do that and think about that, then you might be worthy of calling yourselves Liberals.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments. The Chair recognizes the member from Ottawa-Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I would just like to mention some of the things that our government has done and will be doing. Housing was mentioned by the member for Beaches-East York. Our government has signed an agreement with the federal government. It's the largest agreement that has ever been signed for housing: \$301 million federal, \$301 million provincial. It will create 15,000 units of housing in Ontario. Of those, 1,000 units are now occupied and 4,000 more units are under construction. It takes some time. We know that for seven or eight years, the provincial government was out of investing in social housing. Our government has got back into investments and these units are being created. This will make a difference in Ontario.

We know that social housing was downloaded on the cities. I was on council when we got 10,000 units that came from the province; I think it was in 2001. Certainly, investments in social housing are needed. So these are some of the things we are doing as a government, and \$300 million is a lot of dollars considering that we are coming from a \$5.6-billion deficit that we inherited. It's a matter of trying to put the dollars in the right place.

The Minister of Education is investing in schools, and that's going to help. It's not enough, but it's certainly a big improvement, and that's going to help in some of these areas.

Thank you, Speaker. That's the end of my two minutes.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Of course, the former mayor of East York, the member for Beaches–East York, always speaks eloquently about these social issues, and more so tonight. It was a great speech.

He talked about the need for housing. I agree with the member that there are people in Toronto, and in Ontario really, who need adequate shelter. We live in a severe climate, and people who live in this climate need shelter, and they need adequate shelter.

In my entire life, I have never had a new house. Building new houses for public housing—I'm not sure I can equate that. Have subsidies for people so they can have adequate housing, whether it be 10 years old, 20 years old, or whether it be some kind of basement apartment or those kinds of things, providing it's adequate. Building a new house for someone who is not participating in the economy for one reason or another—I'm not sure I can agree with that.

I understand the member's point, and I agree with him that adequate housing is an absolute must in our country, but I am not sure that I would agree that the solution he gives is the right one. We would differ on that. I think we agree on the direction that it should take. I would go the subsidy route, and you would go the subsidized housing route, which quite frankly didn't work very well when you were in government.

1640

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I am pleased to participate in the debate on second reading of Bill 18. This government has made a commitment to the people of Ontario to build a strong economy, and what Bill 18 does is help to achieve that commitment. We intend to do all of what we said we were going to do, and this bill will assist us in achieving that.

As you can see, this bill also increases investors' confidence in Ontario. I'm sure all of us will agree that by doing that, there will be more investment in Ontario. By having more investment in Ontario our economy will do better, and of course we can afford more affordable housing because more tax will come in. Potentially we will be able to build additional subway lines where new lands will be available for affordable housing and normal housing for everybody to enjoy in Ontario.

In the taxation area, we are recommending an increase in the income threshold for the Ontario property and sales tax credit for seniors. That number is going up to \$22,250 a year. That increase will give real money for people in Ontario, for people in Concord and Thornhill, the area I represent. Seniors are certainly affected by our tax system. When we talk about property taxes, they certainly are affected more than others because of their fixed income. This will give them a little break, which I'm sure they will be very pleased to receive. That is why we should all support Bill 18.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): What we are speaking about is a budget bill. In light of what has taken place in the auto sector—I mean, we're starting to see the

dominoes fall. The auto sector is the largest employer in the province of Ontario, and Ontario has always been known as the economic engine of Canada. One of the problems we're experiencing is that government should be establishing a climate or an area that's designed to attract and foster business and business development. The best way to move on with life is a good job. Some of the areas that we should have been looking at in this is possibly the gas guzzler tax that a previous government—a Liberal government, I might add—brought in, which adds in excess of about \$1,000 for a vehicle that is mostly produced in Ontario. Something to enhance and promote the built-in-Ontario and driven-in-Ontario would certainly assist the largest employer.

And there are some other areas. We're hearing about electricity bills where there were overpayments or the fact that we made more money—we're giving the money back now. Should we not be looking at fostering and encouraging businesses by providing electricity at a reasonable cost so they can continue to deliver so many things?

Some of the other things that should be mentioned in the short time given here: fuel costs, for example. General Motors, like most businesses, runs on a just-in-time delivery service whereby they are incumbent on everything coming in by transport trucks. In Oshawa we have in excess of 1,000 trucks a day coming in, and when the fuel price goes up, guess what else's cost goes up? Business is restructuring and taking place, and all these affect the bottom line, which is fewer jobs in Ontario.

One thing I should say too: If as a society you're willing to accept purchasing goods at substantially reduced costs, so should you be willing to accept the wages that are in line with the production of those goods.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Beaches–East York for a response.

Mr. Prue: Just in the two minutes, for the member from Ottawa–Orléans, I agree: \$301 million plus \$301 million is a lot of money. The unfortunate thing is that the federal government has only put forward \$80 million of that. That was not matched, though, by the province at all. This budget contains only a maximum expenditure of \$30 million. Our own inquiries have shown that the agreement that was signed allows the province up to 20 years to pay their portion of the \$301 million. So you have 20 years, which will limit it and can limit it to an average of \$15 million per year. That is simply not adequate. It is not going to do what this much-ballyhooed agreement said it was going to do. It is pretty sad. It's these long-term, 20-year agreements, and the people need the help now.

To the member from Halton, I thank him for saying that something needs to be done. I know that he appreciates subsidies more than building houses. I appreciate the building of housing and fixing up the old housing more than I appreciate the subsidies, but I would have to agree with him that there is a mix available to this government. You need to do whatever you can, and in some cases it's the fastest to do.

The member from Thornhill was talking about new buildings, and yes, I agree: Get the economy going—great. But he talked about the increase to seniors, and that's a little-known thing in here. All it is, is that this is the same portion of a bill that is being put literally in front of every province and territory. It is to bring us in line with what the federal government has already done. Like so many bills, it is not an initiative of this government. It is simply putting the income tax in line provincially as well as federally. Will it give more money to seniors? Yes, but it is not something that I think you can take credit for. This was done by someone else in Ottawa a long time ago.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. McNeely: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 18, An Act to implement 2005 Budget measures and amend various Acts. I think generally I want to speak about investments this government is making and how that impacts me in Ottawa—Orléans and in the city of Ottawa.

Orléans is a community of 100,000 people. We've been struggling in Ottawa to get our share of the health dollars. That goes back many years, when we used to provide health services to Quebec. Since we spend 46 cents of every dollar on health care, it is extremely important that each community in this province gets its share of the health care and that there is equity across the province for health care.

One of the things in the past, and certainly when I was elected in October 2003, was that I tried to get answers to see how we compared to other parts of this province. That information was not available, and didn't come to us until I think May of this year, when the ICES report came out. The report, Access to Health Services in Ontario, April 2005, was measuring the wait times that were in place in 2003-04, when this Liberal government was elected.

One of the things we heard during the campaign and during that period was that Ottawa had one MRI on a per capita basis, compared to Toronto having 2.2. This was in the newspapers. We felt this, because a lot of our people had to go to the US or Quebec. Actually, an MRI exam site was set up in Gatineau, Quebec. That's where a lot of the MRIs were being done. This was the word we could hear and it certainly caused us concern. We had two hospitals, the Riverside and the Grace, close. There was an attempt to close the Montfort Hospital, and the courts resisted that and told the government before us that they couldn't close it. There was an attempt to close the cardiac unit at the children's hospital. So there was a major attack on the health care services in Ottawa throughout that period, and that came out in the ICES report. That was the first time we could see it.

Ottawa, the Champlain district, which is probably 60% Ottawa, and the surrounding districts were 14th out of 14 when measured against other health districts across this province. Being 14th out of 14 explained everything, but it took a year and a half after we were in government before that information could be brought together. Now there's a Web site that's going to measure those wait

times. I must say that our government and Minister George Smitherman had been making announcements. The people who were using the diagnostic equipment or medical equipment in hospitals were coming to us, saying, "We have old equipment." Certainly a lot of that equipment has been replaced. We've been well treated by the provincial government in health care. Minister Smitherman tried to give us more knees and hips, but he couldn't, because there were not the operating facilities, the anaesthesiologists or the operation teams there. We've got the maximum that we can use.

1650

There have been big improvements in the Ottawa area since we came along. We have two new MRIs in our community, one in Orléans, and this has started to help the wait times. We still have people going to Gatineau, Quebec, but this hysterical thing of saying that because we were serving Quebec, it has hurt the Ottawa area—I'm very thankful that our minister got hold of the facts, has that Web site, recognized that we were last in the province in health care funding and has done a lot about it. We've seen it in our communities. I've seen it with the MRIs. MRIs that used to work eight hours a day are now working through the night.

This budget, with the concentration on health care, is going to really help my community, has really helped my community, and will be in addition to all the dollars that have gone into education and economic development. I believe this budget is the right budget for Ontario. It has taken us forward, and we're going to have that economic development ability to fund health, education and other ministries and certainly make Ontario a much better place.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Chudleigh: This is a budget bill, and it's interesting that this government is so interested in affecting—I think this bill affects 23 different acts. In reviewing those acts, those different statutes, albeit very quickly, my assessment would be that not one of those statutes would affect the people in Ontario who are losing their jobs to plant closures and plant layoffs in the province today.

I don't think this government truly understands what the working people of Ontario are going through in the province today. There have been over 8,000 people laid off in the last month, month and a half. There have been 42,000 manufacturing jobs lost in the last year. Yes, I know, I hear the minister and I hear the Premier talking about 214,000 new jobs in Ontario, but most of those jobs are part-time. When you have a part-time job—

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): Not true.

Mr. Chudleigh: Yes, it is true. I'm sorry, Minister, it is true. It's very true that the 214,000 new jobs that have been created in Ontario are mostly in the service industry. There have been some in education, but most of them are part-time jobs. When you have a part-time job, you don't go out and buy a house, you don't go out and buy a car, you don't go out and buy a major appliance;

you kind of hunker down and subsist until you can get yourself a full-time job on which dreams can be born, dreams can be made and dreams can be fulfilled.

I'm disappointed in this budget bill. I'm very disappointed that they're not taking any action against the travesty that is happening to Ontario's manufacturing industry.

Mr. Prue: To the member from Ottawa—Orléans, unfortunately I missed some of your speech because one of your colleagues came to talk to me about mine, but I did hear a little tiny bit of it.

I do empathize in some way with the circumstances that this government found itself in. I do empathize, knowing that the province certainly has suffered, first through a recession and later, through some years, a pretty brutal government, particularly those people at the lower end of the economic scale. But the reality is that you have an obligation to put forward a plan that will assist each and every person in this province to make things better. The members from the Conservative Party have talked to you about the need for a better economic plan. I can certainly echo that and say that. I would think that you could agree with that as well.

We have to protect the manufacturing industry of Ontario. For too long, we were classified as hewers of wood and drawers of water. We then developed a manufacturing base that brought great prosperity to this province. But now we are seeing the erosion of that prosperity, and it is not being replaced by high-paying jobs. He is correct that many of the jobs that have been created—and I'm thankful they're created—are in the service industry. They are not paid to the same extent or to the same money as good, mostly unionized jobs that are being lost.

People have a desire to get a job. I talked to a woman from Oshawa the other day. This was before the announcement. I was talking about an MPP, and she very proudly told me, "You guys are underpaid," because as a unionized auto worker in Oshawa, she made more than we did. I hope she's not one of the ones losing her job. But the reality is that those are the jobs people want, not the ones at minimum wage.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to engage in a short two-minuter. I want to thank the member from Ottawa—Orléans for describing the circumstances that he found himself in in their community about the MRI. I look forward to the day when I can stand and make the same announcement about Brant.

Having said that, I want to talk just a short moment about the member from Beaches—East York's comments about the housing issue. I want to assure him that there is a very large plan that is going on about housing. They're quick to say that there are no houses actually, but these are new housing projects that are going on. I think he realizes that it takes a little longer to get brand new projects up and off the ground.

One of the things I want to point out to him is something that's happening in my riding that I challenge all of us to take a look at as a possible template or model, and that is home ownership—not just rental units but home

ownership. The city of Brantford is partnering with Habitat for Humanity. They're going to be working together, doing a large project that's going to see about 45 homes come on-line, some of them with Habitat for Humanity and some of them with affordable housing. The consideration, and we're talking with the ministry right now, is about whether or not some of them can be home ownership. So I think we need to make some new challenges and new ideas, and I really thank the partners that are happening in my riding for that.

I think we need to know more about that. I'm going to do a paper on that, to actually present, to indicate that there's another way we can start attacking this housing shortage and home ownership shortage as well. My kudos to Habitat for Humanity, my kudos to the city for being creative in different ways to partner with these, and the private sector is on board with this as well. I think we need to take a look at that for the future, and in the near future.

The second comment, to the member from Halton in terms of the jobs: I want to make sure that he understands clearly that I see the glass as half full instead of half empty, half full inasmuch as we've generated a \$5-billion investment in the auto industry through our strategy, and I think that's a good start. It's not the answer to those people laid off, but it's a darn good start to make sure that we secure the manufacturing jobs.

Mr. Ouellette: I will continue on along those lines that I spoke about earlier and my perspective of a government's responsibility in providing a fostering environment so business can flourish and move ahead. Sometimes people classify profit as a bad thing, but in order for business to make a profit, people have to be helping out and working in those areas.

When you look at what's taken place recently in Oshawa and in the auto sector, you've lost thousands of jobs already, which have been mentioned, but some of the other areas that haven't been spoken about are the spinoff industries and what's taking place there. We effectively feel that there's going to be some large numbers come forward that are going to be directly affected because of these layoffs, because in what's taken place the feeder plants will no longer be able to supply those lines that won't be running in the years to come.

Some of the things the government should be doing, and I would hope that they're planning—this is a bit of a heads-up, I think. One of the areas that they can look at is that industry is changing; it's coming full circle somewhat again. We moved to just-in-time delivery service because it was more cost effective to transport those goods in as opposed to storing them or manufacturing them directly in that area. What you're going to see now, in my opinion, due to the high cost of transportation, is a movement back toward local development to feed those plants. What this government should be doing is looking at ways to assist those businesses so they can now provide plants in those areas, to make it easier to use the services locally as opposed to trying to transport them

from Michigan and other parts of North America that are becoming very cost-prohibitive.

One of the other areas that needs to be addressed from the auto sector as well, and I don't think I'm going to get time to talk about it, is retraining of the skilled labour. What kind of programs are going to come into place for these individuals who are going to be displaced because of the job loss and the shutdown there? How is government going to be able to provide a service to upgrade these individuals, as in the past? I believe that when the steel industry shut down, there were a large number of retraining programs for individuals. Hopefully, they'll come forward with agreements and amendments with the companies and workers affected, so that we can retrain those so they can become working parts of the community.

1700

The Acting Speaker: In response, the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. McNeely: I think the budget is moving in the right direction. To have \$5 billion of new investment in our major job creator in Ontario is the right direction, and it's shown to be the right direction with the large investments that have been coming our way and the net increases in jobs in the automotive sector from these new investments. So those dollars are in the right place. They're doing the right job and this government is on the right track.

The budget in many ways is on the right track because of the major investment in post-secondary education. We were among the last—I think we were 49th out of 52 when you look at the States and the province of Ontario. We were ahead of Mississippi in post-secondary education. This investment of \$6.2 billion is going to bring us up to the Canadian average, where we should be. We let that gap between what we put into the federal government and what we get out grow during the 1990s. As far as investments are concerned, the previous government did not put in those investments, did not keep up with where we should have been. We didn't have the support. To be last in post-secondary education in Ontario, one of the strongest provinces, wasn't right and that gap is being closed.

Yesterday the minister announced the retraining dollars that he's been able to work out with the federal government. Those are extra dollars for retraining our workers, making them the best workers in this country and making sure we keep jobs in Ontario.

I believe we're doing it the right way. This is the right budget. We're going in the right direction and we're going to make sure that Ontario is strong, has a good education system and has a good health system.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener—Waterloo): I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 18, the Budget Measures Act, 2005. Regrettably, during the past two years, the McGuinty Liberals have been running what have been very massive deficits in the province of Ontario, and that despite the fact they have seen their

revenues skyrocket by \$13 billion since taking office. It's very much like we've seen in the past. It's tax and spend and tax and spend, despite the fact that the Liberal government promised to balance their budget each and every year they were in office. However, their 2005 budget clearly shows that the deficit is not going to be eliminated until at least 2008-09.

Based on this tax and spend, I regret to inform this House that the average Ontario family today—that's two income earners making about \$61,000—that family and other families are now paying over \$2,000 more per year in additional taxes and costs that they were not paying when the Liberals came to office in 2003. So in two short years, people are now paying \$2,000 more in taxes. As a result, obviously, some people this year are going to have to do their Christmas just a little differently.

I was listening to the radio on the drive in this morning and there was mention of the fact that some families this year were going to face a tighter financial situation, not only because of increase in taxes but because of layoffs and some insecurity about jobs in the future. There were some suggestions as to how people could better make ends meet and how they could perhaps purchase some less expensive toys for their children, but still ensure they could have a happy holiday.

As the result of Liberal policies that have been introduced this past two years, we are seeing investment fleeing this province. Regrettably we have seen over 42,000 manufacturing jobs lost. Of course, this week we heard from GM that there were going to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of 3,600 jobs—the number varies a little bit, but the reality is that these jobs are going. I can tell you that in my riding of Kitchener—Waterloo and in the region of Waterloo, these job losses in the automotive sector are going to contribute, and are contributing, to some stress because we have some auto suppliers in our community, and obviously there's no guarantee they will be able to continue to have an obligation or a contract to provide these parts to GM. So there is some anxiety as a result of Liberal policies, which are contributing to the jobs lost in Ontario.

Some of the policies that are probably causing investors to seriously consider whether they will stay in this province, or whether they come into this province, or whether they will choose to expand their business in this province are, for example, the higher corporate taxes people in this province are forced to pay. They do so, but it's at a cost to jobs for people who obviously depend on the jobs to support their families.

It's also a result of the very uncertain energy policy we see in Ontario today. We have seen electricity rates skyrocket. In fact, we keep hearing that if you think your rates are high now, just wait until 2006. We are hearing from some of the plants that are closing that the decision to close the plant here and perhaps transfer the operation to the United States or to Mexico or to another province of Canada or to China has been very much influenced by the lack of security about future energy prices, and also by whether we'll even have an affordable supply of

electricity, because this government, under Premier McGuinty, made a promise, as you know, to close the coal plants by 2007. They have now realized that's not possible, so it's now 2009. But the reality is that there is no long-term plan to ensure that people and businesses in this province are going to have an affordable and stable supply of energy in the future. So again, as businesses make these decisions about whether they'll stay in Ontario or whether they'll expand, the whole issue of the skyrocketing electricity rates is a huge factor in that decision-making.

Of course, another issue that causes people to consider whether they're going to stay here in the province of Ontario is the escalating WSIB rates, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board rates. This government refused to listen to those who operate businesses in Ontario, to the employers who pay these costs, and those costs for some of the employers have increased very dramatically. That again is a factor people take into consideration. It's just plain bad news for employees, because it's the employees who are going to lose the jobs if that company decides they're going to have to lay off workers or if maybe they need to move elsewhere.

Another issue that certainly is a cause for concern in the case of one business, Dow Chemical in Sarnia, is Bill 133, the spills bill, where you're now guilty and have to prove your innocence.

Another one is the new health care user fees, from a government that was elected with a promise not to raise taxes, which at the time said, "I won't raise your taxes and I won't lower them either." We have a Premier who stood up during the last election campaign of 2003 on a regular basis and we saw him many times during the course of a day making this promise to the taxpayers in Ontario. And yet, what did this government do? They introduced a new health tax that is causing families and others in this province who pay this tax some extreme hardship; this from a government that at the same time has delisted services such as optometry—which means eye tests—physiotherapy and chiropractic services; this from a government that is asking people in this province to pay more through the health tax and yet get less. These are all factors that have contributed to a rather uncertain economic climate in Ontario.

1710

Unfortunately, it has contributed as well to employers closing jobs and laying off people. It's creating real hardship for people in this province. When you think of the fact that we've now lost 42,000 manufacturing jobs, plus the almost 4,000 GM jobs that have been announced, there are going to be men and women and their families and children who are very much impacted. Most of these jobs are being lost as a result of the policies that this McGuinty Liberal government has put in place during the past two years. We can only hope that they won't do more damage over the course of the next two years.

I want to turn to health, because their attempts to deal with hospitals are resulting in some hardships for people

in Ontario. We know that we don't have enough doctors, including family doctors. In fact, the Ontario Medical Association this week put out a press release and a report indicating that it was reaching a near-crisis point under this government. We heard from the emergency doctors who came to Queen's Park this week. They indicated they were seeing patients who were waiting longer and, as a result, were suffering and in more pain. They also spoke to some situations where it had actually contributed to the mortality of individuals who were not treated in time. We have nurses in this province—the ONA—who have indicated that despite the rhetoric that they were going to create 8,000 new nursing positions, those positions are not being created. We've also heard from some of the long-term-care facilities that this government has not been living up to its obligations in their commitment to funding. They met here at Queen's Park this week.

Let's take a look at the impact on hospitals that have been forced by the Ministry of Health to balance their budgets, and the cuts that we now see. Bluewater Health in Sarnia is laying off more than 100 health care jobs. That was October 14, 2005. We see that Lakeridge Health up in Oshawa—this was in an article on November 15—is cutting 300 positions, which includes cuts to nursing staff. We already know that emergency room physicians have told us that there are not enough beds and not enough nurses, and this is adding to the wait times in emergency rooms. Certainly, at Lakeridge Health, this is further going to exacerbate the waiting time situation. We know that as a result of the demands of this government, Cornwall Community Hospital eliminated 13 positions on February 10 of this year. Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, according to an article on February 17, laid off more than 20 people. Rouge Valley Health System, in an article on April 7, said they were eliminating 24 full-time and 12 part-time positions, which includes 10 full-time and nine part-time nursing positions. On February 11, in the Peterborough paper, we read that Peterborough will lay off 75 full-time and part-time staff, including nurses, physiotherapists and social workers. On September 21, we read that Quinte Healthcare is proposing to cut services by closing three critical care beds at Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital and six surgical beds at Trenton Memorial. On May 3, the Royal Ottawa Hospital and the Brockville Psychiatric Hospital indicated that they had laid off senior administrative staff and warned that more cuts were certainly going to follow.

We are seeing cuts in hospitals throughout Ontario—cuts that are impacting on patient care, that are cutting the number of nurses in our hospitals. As our emergency room physicians told us, because there are not enough beds in the system despite the fact that this government did make a commitment in 2003 to increase the number of beds in our hospitals, we are not seeing that happen. So patients are being asked to wait longer and longer for services. As a result, we're simply seeing more suffering, more pain and, as I indicated, in some cases people are

simply not receiving the health care they need and there are some deaths that result as well.

Let me go back to Lakeridge. On April 15 there was a headline: "Lakeridge Health Budget at \$18.7 Million in the Red Despite Significant Job Cuts." That was when the hospital had announced that they were going to cut these 308 positions to help reduce the hospital's deficit and meet the government's balanced budget requirement.

People worked really hard in all of the hospitals throughout Ontario to try to maintain the level of service, to maintain the staff complement that they believed was necessary to meet the needs of the people in their area. But, regrettably, they have been forced to make these cuts, and it is going to cause further hardship and increase waiting times throughout Ontario. As a result, people are going to suffer.

Rouge Valley Health System on April 7, as I said, announced their intention to eliminate these 24 full-time and 12 part-time positions. We know that these types of cuts do impact access to patient services. So it's important to remember that that community is going to be impacted.

Of course, here we have another article from Lakeridge Health—again, this constant talk about 300 job positions cut. This includes cuts to nursing staff in Port Perry. But, again, they stress that the government has asked them to balance the budget. They've done everything they can in non-patient-care areas. So in order to balance the budget, they had to submit plans for patient reduction options. People are trying to do what they can but it's certainly difficult.

At the Bluewater Health board—this is interesting. October 14: It says that the Bluewater Health board had announced in July it was axing 169 jobs. It was cutting operating room times, closing labs and imaging departments and shutting down the palliative care unit. It also goes on to say that this announcement by the Bluewater Health board has sent shock waves through the Sarnia and Lambton communities. I know that, because I have had hundreds and hundreds of names on petitions indicating their concern about these job losses that potentially are also going to contribute to a reduction in operating room times, closing of labs and imaging departments and shutting down of the palliative care unit as they know it today. The cuts will include cuts to nursing staff, technicians, housekeeping, maintenance and security. When they made this announcement, it still left the hospital with \$2.4 million more to cut. So it certainly is contributing to less access to services within our hospitals.

This Peterborough headline in February of this year said, "Among 75 full and part-time layoffs, the hospital will lose 39 registered practical nurses, four registered nurses and a number of physiotherapists and social workers."

1720

These nursing cuts that I'm talking about that hospitals were forced to make in order to meet the balanced budget requirements of this government are in addition to the layoffs or firings that hospitals were asked to make by

this government in January. In fact, they were given \$91 million by this government so that they could fire 767 nurses. It makes absolutely no sense whatsoever that you would give hospitals that amount of money so that they could simply lay off and fire more nurses.

We see that all of these initiatives demonstrate that this government doesn't have a plan for health care. People are desperate to have access to a family doctor. They are desperate to ensure that once they're diagnosed with a condition, and someone indicates to them that there's a need for surgery, that surgery would take place as soon as possible, not one or two years into the future. Yet, with these cuts in hospital budgets, nursing and auxiliary staff, the wait times are simply going to go in the wrong direction and have a very, very detrimental impact on patient care.

I talked about the struggle that the Cornwall Community Hospital was having in dealing with its \$5-million deficit. Everybody wants to be assured that there will be no cut to services. I mentioned the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

If we take a look at what's happening around Ontario, certainly if we take a look at the OMA report, if you take a look at the headline that ONA used, words that both doctors and nurses are using today are, "There is a crisis." This crisis—that's their word. That was the word of the OMA and that was the word of ONA, the nurses' group. This crisis has now been developing and worsening under the watch of this government. Certainly I won't be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I'm pleased to participate in this debate on Bill 18, An Act to implement 2005 Budget measures and amend various Acts.

In this bill, if passed, the government is setting their key priorities. One of the key priorities is that they are making some key investments. The key investments that this government wants to make are in the areas of health, education and housing.

In my own riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, this government is building a new, 608-bed, state-of-the-art hospital, which will create new jobs as well as look after the health of the people of this province.

This government is also committing itself to invest in education. This government has committed \$6.2 billion over the next five years in post-secondary education. This is the largest investment this government has made in the last 40 years—the largest ever made by any government.

I believe that Bill 18 is the way to go, and this sets up the priorities by our government. Our government is doing the right things. They are making the best investments in the areas of health. I am really proud of this government and I want to support this bill.

Mr. Chudleigh: I appreciate the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, who spoke so eloquently on this bill. She echoes my same thoughts: that this bill, being a budget bill and dealing with 23 different pieces of legislation,

doesn't do one thing for the people of Ontario who no longer have a job, who have been laid off, or whose companies have closed. There are over 40 companies in Ontario that have announced their closure in the last month and a half, the largest among them General Motors, which is closing their plant number two. This is a wake-up call for anybody who doesn't understand that this province has some serious difficulties, brought on, I might add, in my opinion, by the unprecedented, historic tax increase in the spring 2004 budget. The lag time between a budget introduction, a government policy introduction, and the actual implications that it has within the business community is well known to be a year, a year and a half, two years. Well, here we are a year and a half after that application of the largest budget increase in Ontario's history, and now we're seeing companies close up across Ontario.

This budget bill which we are debating before the House today has not one thing in it that will help the people of Ontario who are facing a very bleak Christmas. They are facing a Christmas without a job. They're looking into the new year when they're going to be laid off or their job is going to be discontinued or they're looking at a finite period of employment. The employment that is available to them in this province now is part-time and it's in the service industry. It's disgusting.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I thought the comments made by our good friend the member from Wellington-Grey, I think it is—I never get the ridings right.

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): Kitchener-Waterloo.

Mr. Bisson: Kitchener-Waterloo. Thank you very much. That's somebody else.

I think her comments were well done, but one of the things I would like to have heard is her comments and thoughts in regard to where the federal government is going with its largesse. We've noted over the last week or so that there's this imminent federal election being called and all of a sudden the federal government is out there on a spending spree. I always thought Paul Martin was a fiscal conservative but it would appear that Mr. Paul Martin has become somewhat less than a fiscal conservative when you take a look at the almost \$3 billion to \$5 billion that he's announced over the last week. I think it's rather interesting.

I'd like to hear the member's comments on that and specifically on the softwood lumber industry, because we know there was an announcement today of some substance. The federal government all of a sudden has woken up and found out there's a crisis in the forest industry. I say, better waking up late than never at all, I guess, but I wonder where they've been for the last two years. Could it be that an election is going to be called in a couple of days which all of a sudden makes it recognize that there is a crisis in the forest industry and that somehow they've got to find some way of responding? I just find that if people think of us as politicians in a cynical way, this is much the reason. Sometimes a lot of

political games are played on issues that, quite frankly, deserve our fullest attention.

The other thing I would say to the government with regard to this particular budget is that it's yet to be seen if a number of the initiatives announced in the budget this year are actually going to be coming to fruition, because we've noted over the last number of years—and this Liberal government and McGuinty have not invented this—that governments in the past have made fanfare announcements in their budgets and we haven't seen a heck of a lot come of them when it comes to implementation. I'm just wondering if the member wants to comment on whether she expects those things that she cares about in the budget to be implemented.

1730

Mr. Milloy: I listened with great interest to the member's statement. Early on, she spoke about a certain, shall I use the words "lack of credibility," in the last election that came forward. She talked about a Premier who made some comments. I was quite shocked when I found that she didn't talk about Premier Ernie Eves, who stood up week after week, evening after evening, throughout the leaders' debate and said, "Our budget is balanced." I attended constituency meeting after constituency meeting, all-candidates' meetings, where I heard from my Conservative opponent, "We've balanced the budget." He pointed to the public accounts that came out in August, which said, "Despite the fact that Ontario had had some hardships this year, we're on our way to balancing the budget." I think we were a little bit surprised to come in and find a \$5.6-billion mess that the Premier of this province, Premier Eves, had forgotten to tell us about.

At the same time, my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo, a neighbouring riding, mentioned the fact that the health premium—Ontarians had gotten nothing. That is an outrageous statement. I think it's also an outrageous statement for someone who's coming from Waterloo region, where we've seen the type of investments in health care over the last two years which have shown the results of the health premium, whether it's more money for home care, whether it's more money for home supports, whether it's money that's gone into our local hospitals for hips and knees, for cardiac, or for cancer care. We stood in her riding several weeks ago and announced the go-ahead of the capital plan for Grand River Hospital, where we're going to see a new intensive care unit and where we're going to see expansion in terms of mental health services.

The health premium has gone into improving health care in this province; it has gone into improving health care in Waterloo region.

With 11 or 10 seconds left, I also have to mention the \$6.2 billion put into post-secondary education. Again, as a member from Waterloo region with three leading post-secondary institutions, how could you ignore that?

The Acting Speaker: In response, the Chair recognizes the member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

Mrs. Witmer: Thank you very much to the members for Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale, Timmins–James Bay, Halton and, of course, Kitchener Centre.

I just want to correct the record. To the member from Kitchener Centre, I am so pleased you talked about the health investments, because I am pleased to share with all of the people here that it was our previous government—

Interjection.

Mrs. Witmer: It was our government that set up the Health Services Restructuring Commission. As the member full well knows, it was our government that made the announcement in order to ensure that St. Mary's Hospital in Kitchener would have a new cardiac centre. It was our government that announced that there would be a new cancer centre. It was our government that announced the first MRI—in fact, we did two. It was our government that actually introduced and put into place the first community health centre.

So yes, we have enjoyed a tremendous growth in health services in the region of Waterloo, in Kitchener–Waterloo. We have to thank the previous government for all of the investments that were made. There were millions and millions and millions of dollars invested into our community. I'm just so glad that the member reminded me of all of those investments that we made.

We also made huge investments in post-secondary education. We also announced many new schools which were going to be built. We have Sir John A. Macdonald, which is a new school, we have elementary schools, and I am very pleased to say that Conestoga College in our community was the beneficiary of our largesse, as was Laurier, as was the University of Waterloo. We now have a new centre. I can tell you that tremendous investments were made by the previous government.

Unfortunately, the budget we have before us today only leads us to more job losses.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bisson: I was just waiting with anticipation to have an opportunity to talk about the budget bill. I'm telling you, it's so exciting because, when we talk about the budget bill, we can raise a whole bunch of issues. This is my opportunity, I guess, to put my shopping list out there for issues that matter to me and, I would argue, probably matter to many people in my constituency, as it probably does in many other ridings.

I just want to lay out, in no particular order, a number of issues that I've seen that have been surfacing over the last couple of years that seem to be indicating some kind of a trend when it comes to services. The first thing I want to talk about is services in the community, when we talk about community care. We know, for example, unfortunately there are many people in our communities who need to have special services to be able to live at home independently. We talk about organizations that provide everything from meals on wheels to respite care for caregivers, to nursing care in the home—whatever it might be in order to give people an opportunity to live at home independently. I think all members of the assembly agree with that. There's not a person in here who doesn't

believe that we should make all the investments that are necessary in order to allow people to live at home independently and to participate in our communities as full members of the community. But what I've been noticing as of late is that there seems to be, as we say in French, *un recul*, or in English, a little bit of going backwards when it comes to access.

Here's my observation. What's kind of interesting, too—because just over the last month or so it seems to me I've been getting a lot more of these complaints. I don't know if it's because something recent has happened or if people are hearing that I've been raising these issues publicly, and all of a sudden they're enticed to come to my office, but services for the developmentally handicapped and also for the physically developmentally handicapped—both mentally and physically developmentally challenged, I should say; pardon me.

What I'm seeing is this: For example, in Timmins there's a program that provides respite care for parents who have children with autism, especially those parents who have kids who are a little bit older. As we know, it's sometimes a handful. Parents have to work, both mom and dad. Respite care is a very needed service to give mom and dad a chance to go out and do the banking, do the groceries, do those things that need to be done and not have to always watch the child every waking moment of the day. As we know, it is quite a struggle for parents with autistic kids, because you really can't take your eyes off them. We know, unfortunately, of many tragic instances where children have died or been injured because parents took their eyes, just for a fleeting moment, from a child who is autistic, and sometimes these kids, because they tend to be very active, can get themselves into trouble. God knows, every child can get in trouble. But it's even more difficult for those kids with autism.

The thing I want to raise is that I've been getting an increasing number of complaints that parents who need services when it comes to respite care basically are not able to get that service. What we've seen lately is that Access Better Living in Timmins has really had to struggle to provide services to the community. I want to say up front that it's not the fault of the agency. I believe Access Better Living, and Sandra Williams, who runs the agency, and her staff are doing a great job. The issue is the level of funding.

For example, I'm dealing with one particular case where a councillor in the city of Timmins, Bill Gvozdanovic, who has a son who is autistic, has been told that he has three hours of respite care from now to the end of the fiscal year, which will be March 30. I find that rather distressing. I've raised this issue in the House with the minister already; I've gone to her and spoken to her individually. Bill and his wife are at their wits' end, because they're at the point where they don't know how they're going to manage the rest of the year.

What seems to be happening is that the lauded announcements that the minister, Madam Papatello, has been making do not seem to be getting out into actual

services. I think it speaks of some problem that we have within the system.

Mr. Speaker, I would like at this point to call for a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is present, Speaker.

Mr. Bisson: One should look over his shoulder when he's calling for a quorum. Ah, he snuck in. Very good. I didn't see you. Anyway, we tried. I tell you, sometimes the plans of mice and men will lead to naught.

My point is that in this particular case when it comes to respite care for children with autism, it is really becoming a big problem, because we are finding that many of the parents who need services are being told by the community agency that services need to be rationed. The agency is at their wits' end because they don't want to ration services—certainly not. They want to provide the services that are needed by the community. Therefore, there's this lack of services.

Like I say, I've had an opportunity to raise this with the minister on a couple of occasions now, both in the House in the form of questions but also by way of conversation and by way of letter. It seems that what we're hearing is that there is money being announced by the minister responsible for community and social services, but the money doesn't seem to be getting to the agencies. I have to ask myself what's going on, and it's one of the questions we need answered by this government: What is happening? If you're making announcements, if there are dollars being announced by the minister of the government to provide services in the community, why is it that we're not seeing the money? I will hazard to guess that it's what we've seen in other areas, where there have been a number of announcements about all kinds of things, but the money has not yet flowed. I would just say that the government should be in a position where if it announces money, we should expect the community agencies to get that money on a very rapid basis, because it raises hope within the community, and the community's hopes are dashed when they find out that the services aren't there.

I'm hoping that that money will see its way to the community agencies, but I raise it in debate here in the context of the budget because if the government has made plans in its budget to provide dollars for community agencies like Access Better Living to provide services, then it's up to the government to make sure those dollars are flowing to the agency. I am being told one thing by the minister, but am being told quite differently by the agency.

1740

During constituency week, a couple of weeks ago, all of us travel through our ridings, and those who have large ridings like mine hold what we call community clinics. I was, I believe, in Fauquier, and a young woman, Jessica Bordeleau, came over to see me and told me the following: She is in a sheltered workshop and up until recently had an attendant who would provide care, when

she was there, 100% of the time because there needs to be somebody with her, given her condition. She cannot be left alone. She needs assistance with various parts of daily living. She was lucky because the funding that was provided to the agency in this case was provided for two people, but the second person never got to the agency. The money was provided for two people at 50% each, so because the second person was not in the agency getting care, the agency—rightfully, I think, in their call—decided to provide 100% of the funding for the individual, but when that other person came into the system, she had to be cut back by 50%.

Again, the same story. As I talk to the agency—in this case, the director, Mac Hiltz—I'm being told that the only money they've seen come through their door is the 1.5% they received by way of core funding. The 1.5%, as we all understand, doesn't keep up with inflation. If you look at where hydro rates went last year, where rents are, where wages for employees have gone up, 1.5% doesn't cut it. They may not be falling back as quickly as if they had got nothing, but they're certainly not moving ahead.

As Mac said, "Listen, I would love to give Jessica 100% service, as we used to before, but pray tell me where I'm going to cut somebody else's service." That's the dilemma the agencies are in. If somebody gets something more, somebody else is going to get something less, which speaks to the issue that we are not funding community support services to the degree necessary so that people can live at home independently, and can function within our communities to become fuller members within the community.

I think that's sad, because in the end it's far more expensive to go the other way. If people end up falling through the cracks, either they're going to go into crisis—if they go into crisis, the health costs, the social costs, and I would say even the human costs could be quite tragic, and not only is it tragic to the families, but to the government. I think you'll end up spending a lot more money.

One of the things we need to look at, and maybe it's something the government needs to do, is to mandate one of the standing committees of the Legislature to take a look at what is happening to community support services across Ontario. I don't believe it should be a committee specially appointed by the minister; we all know what happens with those. I think a committee within the standing committees of the Legislature could be given the mandate, either this winter or this summer, to look at what is happening with funding and make recommendations to the government. There might be a case to be made that there is a way of shifting money around; I don't know. There might be enough money in the system to provide services for people if we organize ourselves differently, or maybe it's a strict question that we've got to put more money in, at which point we have to ask ourselves the question, as legislators: Where do we take the money from? What other program is maybe less needy so that we can make sure people get the services they want?

That's one of the things I want to talk about in regard to this budget bill. I just want to make the point, once again, very clearly: If you're going to announce something publicly, you should push the money out the door. Clearly, what's happening in the case of Jessica and what's happening to Bill's son is that the money that has been announced to go through the door has not gone through the door and the agencies aren't getting it. People's hopes are raised and dashed. It's a very tragic thing for individuals.

The other thing I want to raise in the context of this budget is another issue, which the former health minister for the Conservative caucus raised, and that is the whole issue of the perception of health services. I'm going to say up front: In Canada, we have the best health care system in the world, bar none. I think we're very fortunate. We should not speak so disparagingly about health care as to say it's a total failure, because I think it's really a disservice, not only to the ministry staff but the front-line staff as well, when it comes to services. It always strikes me, and I say this as an opposition member: Somebody will stop you on the street or at the coffee shop and say, "Our health care system's awful." Well, talk to the person who comes in contact with the health system, and you find out that it's not as awful as it's purported to be.

Is that to say there are no problems? Of course, there are problems. I just have to say that the danger the government runs in the decisions they've made, by moving with the health tax as they did in the first budget, which was the breaking of a big promise, "I will not raise taxes," is that they've really set themselves up in a position for the next election where the public is going to say, "All right, I'm paying \$2.5 billion more in taxes that I didn't pay before. Am I getting more services?"

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: Is it \$2 billion? Sorry—was it \$2 billion or \$3 billion? I don't remember.

Mr. Prue: It was \$2.4 billion.

Mr. Bisson: I was close. I said \$2.5 billion; it's \$2.4 billion. I see different people throwing up three and five fingers. My point is that the danger the government runs is that by raising the tax, it also raises the expectation that, in the end, health care services will be made much better. Government, as I know it, because I was a member of a government: You can stand in this place or you can stand on a street corner every week, making announcements that the health care system is better, but the litmus test is what the public sees when they enter the system. I would venture to guess, from what I'm seeing out there, that the system is no better and no worse than it was before, and that's the danger for the government. What happens in some cases—for example, I'm dealing with a couple of people right now on issues of travel grants. They have to see specialists in order to deal with particular issues. Their family doctors are saying, "I don't want you seeing specialist A in Sudbury because I think your condition warrants that you see specialist B" in Toronto or Kitchener or wherever it might be. Therefore, the travel grant is not approved, because you're not

going to the closest specialist. People like that say, "With \$2.4 billion in extra taxes, am I any better off?" That's what it's going to come down to.

What I'm seeing in my constituency is a lot of people who are feeling that it isn't any better than it was before. It's not easier to get a travel grant. Certainly, if you have a heart attack, it's like before: Bam, you're in the emergency ward, you're treated, you're put in ICU, and if you've got to get surgery, you're in. Those emergency services in Ontario are second to none. It becomes more of a slippery slope where we get into elective surgery and elective services. That becomes much more difficult because the patient has an expectation. For example, if it's for oncology, "I want to be treated right now. My doctor says I have cancer. I want treatment right now," and the person says that you've got to wait three weeks or five weeks. It puts that patient in a tizzy because all they know is that the more quickly you treat cancer, the better the chances of survival. That's going to be the litmus test. Will people really see that they're any better off? I don't see the evidence of that at this point.

I just caution the government that you've created one heck of a hill—not a hill. That wouldn't be fair. You've created one heck of an expectation that I'm not sure you're going to be able to live up to.

Interjection: Oh, yeah.

Mr. Bisson: I hear a government member saying, "Oh, yeah." Well, let's see. In the next election, that "Oh, yeah" will be tested by the public, right? I'm just saying that that's the problem. I am seeing in my constituency that it isn't that our system doesn't work, because it certainly works for people with emergencies etc. But the system is not markedly better than it was prior to the \$2.4-billion tax that the government announced in its first budget. I just say that there's a bit of a danger for you on that one.

I do want to give the government some credit, though. I've come into this House and criticized the government at times. At times, I've given the government some credit on things. There was an application made by the town of Kapuskasing to create a community health centre. It's something we've been working on for a long time. Unfortunately, the previous Tory government had stopped the NDP initiative of creating health centres across this province. There hadn't been any developed in the time they were in government. This government committed to doing that. In fact, we got our community health centre announced about two weeks ago in Kapuskasing, and I want to say to the minister, George Smitherman, as I said publicly when it was announced, kudos on that one. I think that's something that was well-deserved and is very well received by the community of Kapuskasing. Those are the things you can demonstrate, if there is any benefit for you, as far as the \$2.4-billion tax increase. I guess that to a degree, you can point to the health centre in Kapuskasing as being one of those examples.

But when I look across the riding at, for example, dialysis services: We are still without dialysis services in the community of Hearst. Hearst people who are on

dialysis still have to go to Kapuskasing or Timmins to get weekly dialysis services. On days that the weather is bad, that becomes a very big problem. We seem to be having a markedly increased number of people who need dialysis services in the Hearst area. I think that people in Hearst are going to ask, "Am I any better off?" Then they see things like what happened recently, where the Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board had basically announced that there would be a reduction in ambulance services in the communities of Hearst and Kapuskasing. In the case of Kapuskasing, they would have had to go from 24-hour service down to 16-hour coverage, which is to say you'd have no coverage at night and the paramedics would have to be called in, on-call. On the issue of Hearst, there was going to be reductions of services there where I believe about eight paramedics were going to be let go.

We had a number of community meetings. I met with the chair of the district service board and the mayor, J.C. Caron. I dealt with Steve Trinier, who is the director of ambulance services for the DSSAB and other people. What it really came down to was that they said this: When the land ambulance services were transferred to the municipalities, they were guaranteed they were going to get 50-cent dollars. This goes back to my argument: They've got to see it getting better. Here, they were promised 50-cent dollars on downloading the ambulances, but where we find ourselves now is that the 50-cent dollar is no longer a 50-cent dollar. Because costs have gone up and the province has not increased its share of monies toward land ambulance services, this means the share of the cost of ambulance service has gone up for municipalities, where the province is now paying around 36% versus the 50% they were supposedly going to pay before.

There's a happy ending to this story. We did a lot of work trying to convince the DSSAB that they needed to find some other way to find savings rather than cutting out emergency services in those communities, and the DSSAB found a way to do it, but I want to point out that it means they've got to find savings somewhere else. The DSSAB was forced to a decision: "OK, we've saved the 24-hour service in Kapuskasing. We've actually increased services a little bit in Hearst." There was going to be the loss of one permanent paramedic, but they managed a shift so there's more coverage on the weekend. I

give J.C. Caron, the mayor of Kapuskasing, who is also the chair of the DSSAB, much of the credit on this one.

But the DSSAB is in a very tough spot. They now have got to go somewhere else to get the money. My point comes back to my first one, which is that at the election date, will people think they're any better off as a result of the health tax they have to pay? For the people of Hearst and Kapuskasing, when it comes to land ambulance services, they're probably going to say, "No. Jeez, we almost lost it. If it hadn't been for our municipality, we would have lost emergency paramedic services in both Kapuskasing and Hearst."

I say to the government, that's the challenge you face, trying to convince people that the services are better. I don't think an announcement a week, announcing the same thing over and over again, by Minister Smitherman is really going to meet the litmus test when it comes to the public being convinced their health services are better. What they're going to want to see at the end is, when they access the system, "Am I any better off?" That's going to be the test.

I don't have enough time, but I want to say that the other issue the government needs to respond to is the whole issue of what is happening in the forestry sector, not only in northern Ontario but across the province. The industry is in a heck of a mess, and it's not completely an issue that is controlled by market events or what is happening with the Americans or the American dollar. Much of the problem, as the industry says, is a made-in-Ontario problem: the cost of fibre and the cost of transportation of fibre, but the biggest one of all is the cost of electricity. With electricity prices as they are now, we've already seen the mills starting to shut down. You saw Kenora go down; you saw Thunder Bay go down; you saw a whole bunch of other announcements already go down. There will be a lot more, especially if the government moves where I think they will this spring, which is to eliminate the rate cap, and that will push hydro prices another 15% or 20% higher. It will be a disaster for the forestry sector and others across this province.

The Acting Speaker: It being approximately 6 of the clock, this seems like a timely spot to adjourn the House until 1:30 p.m., Monday, November 28.

The House adjourned at 1754.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 24



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Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 28 November 2005

Lundi 28 novembre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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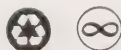
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 28 November 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 28 novembre 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to draw again to the government's attention the need for a new secondary school in north Oshawa. Durham region is among the fastest-growing areas in Canada. Many communities in my riding of Durham are among the fastest-growing in Durham region. However, this growth may force students in north Oshawa to travel outside local neighbourhoods in order to attend high school.

The area north of Taunton Road is hard hit by a lack of accommodation. The Durham District School Board is considering a proposal whereby some students will travel to Donevan Collegiate in south Oshawa, even though they live in the north portion of Oshawa. Donevan is the only high school with some available capacity at the moment. Other schools are also bursting at the seams.

One point that has been raised at public meetings is the need for a Liberal funding policy that would build the schools we need in the communities where they are needed. I urge this government to take action on the policy, or lack of it, for building new schools. I would especially like to urge this government to look into high school accommodation in north Durham so that students have the advantage of attending high school close to their neighbourhoods.

The McGuinty government school accommodation plan is falling apart. I urge the Premier to recognize that the high-growth areas, as well as the small rural schools like the one I mentioned last week, Hampton Junior, are not ignored at the expense of students' futures. Premier, your government's school accommodation plan is failing students. I ask you to respond as soon as possible.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): As a society, I believe we have a responsibility to recognize the importance of a decent, affordable place to live as a starting point in establishing the dignity of a human being. That's why I was honoured this morning to represent the McGuinty government at an historic official opening of six affordable housing projects in my community. The

six projects, jointly funded by the provincial, federal and regional governments, provide 244 units of affordable housing for the region of Waterloo.

Joining me in this morning's announcement were the federal housing minister, the Honourable Joe Fontana, local MPs and regional chair Ken Seiling. All spoke with great enthusiasm about our joint vision for affordable housing that is producing real results.

Last April, Kitchener Centre was chosen as one of the places to announce the new \$602-million Canada-Ontario affordable housing agreement under which Waterloo region has already been allocated over \$10 million in funding to create 300 additional units of rental and supportive housing, as well as \$2.2 million to fund 160 housing allowances.

Today's celebration, however, was about the work that has already been completed, and I want to congratulate everyone involved: our federal partners, regional chair Ken Seiling and members of his council, director of housing Rob Horne and his dedicated staff at the region, and the individual project proponents: the House of Friendship of Kitchener, Cook Homes, Cypriot Homes, Menno Homes and the Old Firehall Lofts. By creating homes for individuals within our community in need, they have done their part to recognize their dignity as human beings.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): This past Thursday evening, I had the great privilege to attend a retirement celebration in honour of Agnes Samler. For the past 12 years, Agnes has provided extraordinary leadership to the Toronto Association for Community Living. Under her leadership, the association has grown and expanded, providing a long list of services and supports to both people with developmental disabilities and their families. She has also provided provincial leadership in advocating for policies and funding for those with an intellectual disability. From closing institutions to repealing the Homes for Retarded Persons Act to a groundbreaking five-year plan that began in 2001, she has truly made a difference.

In 2001, the Harris government announced a five-year plan to expand services and supports for people in the community, from day programs to special services at home to places to live. I was pleased to see the current government complete the final two years of that program.

It is essential that the Minister of Community and Social Services get the support from her colleagues on all sides of the House, particularly the Minister of Finance, to build on the success of this initiative.

Groups in my riding such as the Tamir Foundation, the Ottawa Carleton Association for People with Developmental Disabilities, and Ottawa Carleton Lifeskills are all counting on new support. Their staff need fair wages, aging parents need the confidence to know that their adult children will be cared for when they no longer can do so, and capital money is urgently needed to repair and build new supportive housing.

Let's ensure that these quiet voices are heard. They are counting on our support. I hope our new Minister of Finance is as generous with people with developmental disabilities as the former Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty.

UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT RECREATION CENTRE

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to do two things with my statement: first, to congratulate the grades 5 and 6 students from Hawthorne who are here in my office watching today's statements and question period. I welcome them to witness what happens here in this Legislature. Thank you for coming.

Secondly, the University Settlement Recreation Centre, which is located in my riding, recently celebrated its 95th anniversary. The University Settlement Recreation Centre was originally called the University Settlement House. It was part of the settlement house movement that had its origins in 19th-century England, where Toynbee Hall, the first settlement house, was established in 1884. The movement spread to North America, where one of the most famous settlement houses, Hull House, was founded in 1889 by Jane Addams, remembered today as "the mother of social work." By the time the University Settlement House was established in 1910, the movement was well established in North America.

Settlement houses played a crucial role in helping new immigrants adapt to Canadian society. They offered adult education classes, worked with the children of immigrants, offered after-school recreation and initiated public health services. Many of their volunteers were university students, and social work evolved as a profession along with the settlement houses.

Today, 95 years after its founding, the University Settlement Recreation Centre continues its tradition of serving immigrants and helping them settle in this new country. Today it is a multiservice agency offering day-care, recreation and wellness programs, ESL programs—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

1340

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I rise in the House today to share some good news for seniors and caregivers

in my riding of Markham. Community Home Assistance to Seniors, or CHATS, and Carefirst Seniors will now be able to deliver enhanced services to seniors through the sharing of an annual \$500,000 grant from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

The McGuinty government grant will fund core community services, including caregiver relief, home house-keeping, transportation, escort and interpretation, group dining and wellness programs.

What does this grant and partnership between CHATS and Carefirst Seniors mean for Markham residents? It will mean better health care and dignity for seniors from all communities, including 35% of Chinese Canadians in my riding. For the estimated 500 additional seniors expected to benefit from this alliance, it will also mean greater freedom to shop for groceries, do banking or pursue hobbies.

While the Tories chose to show a continual disregard for our seniors by hiking long-term-care facility fees without warning and removing core minimum standards of care for LTC facilities, the McGuinty government is choosing to elevate the quality of life our seniors need and deserve.

This government's grant to community-based health and social service providers such as CHATS and Carefirst demonstrates a commitment to quality care and to meeting the needs of Ontario seniors throughout our diverse cultural communities.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): I'm honoured to speak today on a critical issue; that is, the state of health care in Durham region.

First, my friend the member from Durham, the member for Oshawa and I had this driven home to us on Friday when we met at 8 o'clock in the morning to hear the report of the advisory panel to the board of trustees of Lakeridge Health Corp. making it clear to us that in one of the most rapidly growing areas in North America, Durham region, it's being ignored by the Liberal government that patient services—basic patient services—will have to be cut unless there is a renegotiation with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care recognizing the needs of Lakeridge Health: five sites in one, not to mention the rural-urban aspects. It's a very serious issue for a district in Ontario that now has more than 500,000 people.

Secondly, the perilous situation with respect to the delayed expansion at the Ajax-Pickering hospital: There is a meeting in Whitby tomorrow night about it, because that hospital also serves part of Whitby.

Thirdly, the sad situation of access to care in Durham, which is supposed to be rolled in to this LHIN which is going to stretch from Victoria Park Avenue in Scarborough to Algonquin Park in eastern Ontario, a ridiculous situation failing to recognize the rapid urban growth in Durham region. This needs to be urgently recognized by the government of Ontario.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Certainly the Minister of Health has responded to the city of Vaughan. My riding of Thornhill shares a portion of Vaughan and Markham. Vaughan, where I was on city council for 18 years, is Canada's 10th-largest city, with a population of 250,000 people, and is growing steadily. Needless to say, when the Minister of Health announced that Vaughan would have a community health centre by 2008, my community was very pleased.

Vaughan CHC is one of 22 new community health centres and 17 satellites across the province to help reduce wait times and provide better access to primary health care. These not-for-profit organizations have the potential to meet the specific needs of their communities with specially designed programs and specialized services. CHC teams include physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, pharmacists and nutritionists.

There are currently 54 CHCs and 10 satellites across Ontario, serving over 300,000 Ontarians. It's expected that these 22 new CHCs and 17 satellites will serve an additional 220,000 Ontarians.

I would like to thank the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for staying focused on our commitment to keeping Ontarians healthy. I look forward to more investments in health care in the city of Vaughan and the region of York, where growth needs additional funding.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I rise today on behalf of all members of this Legislature to extend my condolences to the Beckles family. Minister Gerry Phillips and I had the unfortunate duty and heavy responsibility of attending this young gentleman's funeral this Saturday. He was gunned down on the doorstep of a church, attending the funeral of a young individual who had been gunned down in the prime of his life just a couple of weeks earlier.

It was in this regard that this morning I was able to host a meeting of the Etobicoke strategy group here at Queen's Park. I'm pleased to report that in attendance with me were Ministers Kwinter, Kennedy, Cansfield and Bryant, representing community safety, education, energy and the Ministry of the Attorney General. Recommendations came forward with regard to the involvement of the school communities, corporations, faith-based communities, homework clubs and youth sports clubs—recommendations that we are acting upon, yet recommendations that leave considerable challenges. I am pleased to recognize Minister Kwinter for his announcement of 1,000 new police officers, 250 of whom will be hired here in the city of Toronto.

It's this collective action and leadership that will lead to a solution to this present problem.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I rise in the House today to talk about the need to keep Ontario streets safe and, by extension, the need for strong law

enforcement in our communities. Our government is committed to ensuring that our province has the law enforcement it needs to ensure the highest level of community safety. That's why I couldn't be prouder that last Friday we announced the funding allocation that will enable the hiring of 1,000 new police officers across this province.

As we're all too aware, the city of Toronto in recent months has seen a rash of gun and gang violence in some of its communities. In order to help address these gun and gang activities as well as other crimes, the Toronto police department said that it needed 250 new police officers on their force. I was pleased to hear our government on Friday confirm that, indeed, Toronto will receive those 250 additional officers.

While Chief Blair has welcomed our announcement, the Leader of the Opposition, John Tory, clearly has not. This is surprising because, as we all know, Mr. Tory ran for mayor of Toronto and was once upon a time an advocate for this city. But I must say, times have changed. Instead of championing Toronto and supporting this new, bolstered police service, Mr. Tory last Friday complained that Toronto received too many officers in relation to the rest of the province. He tried to play off Toronto's allocation against the rest of the province, all but ignoring the great need for more officers to address the proliferation of gun and gang activity in the Toronto area.

Mr. Tory also complained about Ottawa's allocation of 95 additional officers, refusing to acknowledge how elated the Ottawa police and municipal representatives were with this announcement.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from Italy, led by the president of the province of Pordenone, Dr. Elio De Anna. Welcome.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I beg leave to present a report on long-term-care facilities activity from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Sterling presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Sterling: This report follows, actually, two auditor's reports: the 2002 auditor's report and the 2004 auditor's report. In the 2004 auditor's report, the auditor

reported on the progress that the Ministry of Health was making with regard to health and long-term care in the province and, in particular, on monitoring quality-of-care issues.

1350

I think the committee would like to stress that notwithstanding the Ministry of Health's desire and their investigation into the status of its examination of the minimum data set—MDS—as a consistent assessment and quality indicator, the committee is still in a quandary as to how fast the ministry is really dealing with that issue.

Therefore, of the several recommendations that we made in the report, I think it would be fair for me as Chair to say that the committee would like the Ministry of Health to get on or get off the whole notion of minimum data set. This has been used by 20 other jurisdictions as a measure of the quality and quantity of service, and we feel the ministry is perhaps dragging its feet on determining and implementing this very important method of measuring the success or failure of our long-term-health-care facilities.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

REPORT OF CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2004 annual report of the Chief Election Officer of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RESPECT FOR MUNICIPALITIES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005

SUR LE RESPECT DES MUNICIPALITÉS

Mr. Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 in relation to municipalities / Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la protection des contribuables en ce qui concerne les municipalités.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the minister wish to make a brief statement?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Thank you, Speaker. I'll wait until ministerial statements.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, November 28, 2005, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1354 to 1359.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Phillips, Gerry
Arthurs, Wayne	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Jackson, Cameron	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Scott, Laurie
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Chudleigh, Ted	McMeekin, Ted	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sterling, Norman W.
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Munro, Julia	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	O'Toole, John	Wong, Tony C.
Flaherty, Jim	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard	
Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 64; the nays are 5.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would draw members' attention to the members' west gallery and recognize our former colleague, Doug Galt of Northumberland, who represented those fine people in the 36th and 37th Parliaments.

I would also like to draw members' attention to the Speaker's gallery and introduce to you players and offi-

cials from the Canadian national cricket team. Welcome, gentlemen.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): On a brief point of order, Mr. Speaker, if I might, and I hope this is in order: He will more formally be introduced next week, but our member-elect from Scarborough, Bas Balkissoon, is in the east gallery.

The Speaker: Welcome. That of course was not a point of order.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I rise today to update members on one of our government's most important community safety initiatives. The Safer Communities-1,000 Officers partnership program represents a significant investment in crime prevention and law enforcement and in making our communities safer and stronger. Together with our municipal and police partners, we are investing in the safety and security of our families and our communities.

The program provides more than \$37 million every year in perpetuity to help municipalities and police services hire 1,000 new police officers. In addition, we've extended funding for those officers hired under the previous government's program, the community policing partnership, in perpetuity. This means that every year the McGuinty government will provide over \$67 million to fund over 2,000 police officers.

Under the Safer Communities-1,000 Officers partnership program, 500 new officers are being assigned to community-based policing, such as street patrols, working with schools and traffic enforcement. The other 500 are being assigned duties related to six priority areas of serious crime, including youth crime, guns and gangs, organized crime, domestic violence, dangerous offenders, and protecting children against Internet luring and child pornography.

We will fund 400 new officer positions hired between October 23, 2003, and March 31, 2006. All 1,000 officers funded under our program will be hired and on duty by October 2007.

Our police partners responded in great numbers to this program. We based our equitable allocation formula on factors such as population, size of the police service and number of requests received. I'm glad to say that every eligible police service that applied to our program is getting funding. No one was turned down.

Last week, we informed police services of their allocations. Mr. Speaker, 940 positions under our program will receive funding of up to \$35,000 per officer per year. That's \$5,000 more per officer than they received from the previous government.

The McGuinty government recognizes the needs of the Ottawa Police Service, which provides policing for a city that last year grew by 14,000 people. Under our program, the city of Ottawa will receive 95 new officers on the streets of our nation's capital during our mandate. Ottawa Police Chief Vince Bevan said, "We could not be more delighted with this announcement by the provincial government. For years, our service did not receive its fair share of provincial funding. This announcement rights those past wrongs. Today we can all say that the city of Ottawa received its fair share." Mayor Bob Chiarelli of Ottawa said the funding will have "a positive impact on every community in the city of Ottawa."

Toronto in particular has experienced a record-high number of gun-related murders this year. This program will help the Toronto Police Service fight guns and gangs by providing funding for an additional 250 officers; 61 of those officers will be dedicated to the targeted areas of youth crime, guns and gangs, and organized crime. Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair lauded the announcement, saying, "These officers will improve my service's ability to combat guns and gangs and violent crime in the city of Toronto." The McGuinty government is pleased that more police officers will be patrolling our neighbourhoods, which is "key to public safety and building positive relationships with our diverse communities."

The McGuinty government recognizes the unique policing challenges in the greater Toronto area. To that end, police services in the GTA will be able to hire a total of 531 new officers by 2007.

Furthermore, our program responds to the special needs of our northern Ontario and First Nations communities, many of which could not afford to participate in the previous government's programs. For too many years, the voices of northerners have been ignored. It was time for a government at Queen's Park to recognize the challenges these communities faced. We are committed to growing vibrant, strong communities in the north. We brought our northern partners to the table during the design of this program and together we tailored it to ensure that it would meet their policing and economic needs. Northern and First Nations communities will receive enhanced funding of up to \$70,000 per officer per year. That's \$40,000 more per officer than they received from the previous government.

In Thunder Bay, Chief of Police Robert Herman acknowledged the McGuinty government's full support to boost their ranks. He said, "The government listened to the concerns of northern police chiefs by setting an appropriate funding formula that addresses the economic reality of our area." Commissioner Gwen Boniface of the OPP said that the Ontario Provincial Police is pleased with the increased allocation of officers to rural and northern communities: "This initiative will help achieve safe communities and a secure Ontario." Chief Wesley Luloff of the Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service thanked our government on behalf of the Ontario First Nations Police Services. He said this initiative "will allow us to put officers in dedicated positions such as community service and drug enforcement."

In closing, I would like to thank Ontario's police officers, each and every one of them, for the important job they do every day. They help keep our communities safe, and we are grateful for what they do.

Ontarians deserve to be safe and feel safe. One thousand new police officers will help make Ontario a safer, stronger province for years to come.

1410

MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I am pleased today to introduce the Respect for Municipalities Act, 2005.

Our government strongly believes that the municipal leaders of this province lead mature governments and are our partners in public service. We have already taken many steps that reflect this belief. Recently this House passed legislation that requires Queen's Park to consult the Association of Municipalities of Ontario on matters that affect them in accordance with the memorandum of understanding that we have with AMO. We have been following through on our commitment to consult AMO with monthly meetings with the association, and the process is working well. Last year, we added a protocol to the memorandum of understanding to ensure that AMO is consulted when the federal and provincial governments are negotiating agreements that have a direct municipal impact.

Our government, for example, took an historic approach to recent discussions with the federal government on its gas tax. We enabled municipalities and the federal government to work together directly to decide the best way to share federal gas tax revenues. As a result, the city of Toronto and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario are full signatories to the agreement we reached.

The Respect for Municipalities Act is yet another way we propose to treat municipalities with the respect they deserve.

Let me give you a brief overview of the proposed legislation. The proposed Respect for Municipalities Act would, if passed, allow the province to give municipalities a new fiscal authority. It would also allow the government to move forward with the proposed legislation to give new fiscal tools to the city of Toronto.

The recently released final report of the joint task force to review the City of Toronto Act recommended that new fiscal tools be provided for the city. The report says, "Just as Toronto requires broader scope to make laws, so too does it require new tools for raising revenue and managing its financial and physical assets. Without these new tools, Toronto's ability to shape development patterns, accommodate population growth and maintain necessary social and physical infrastructure will be compromised."

In its report, the Governing Toronto Advisory Panel speaks to the city of Toronto's need for new fiscal tools as well. "It is extraordinarily difficult to realign resources and begin new initiatives, even of a very modest nature,

in an environment of severe fiscal limitations," the report says.

The proposed act would pave the way for decisions about new fiscal tools within a community to be made by that community, through the actions of their locally elected representatives.

Our proposed act is about respect for municipalities. It recognizes that Torontonians—indeed, residents of any Ontario municipality—can make decisions and hold their councillors and councils accountable, just as Ontarians do across the province on provincial measures through the House.

On a CBC Radio program earlier this month, Toronto's mayor, David Miller, said, "I have to say on the taxing front the most important part of this is we have new revenue tools that can help us meet our responsibilities properly."

In a May news release, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario called on our government to "grant municipalities access to new revenue tools to fund key services." The release goes on to say that "progress must be measured by the extent to which municipalities receive revenue sources and authority commensurate with their growing responsibilities."

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has been of great assistance to our government as we have set out to reform municipal affairs in this province and to rebuild the trust that is so essential between the province and its municipalities for the benefit of all our residents. We are looking to AMO and the city of Toronto for valuable advice as we continue to work together to build a stronger, more competitive, more prosperous Ontario.

Our goal with this legislation is to remove one of the obstacles to giving municipalities more tools to raise revenue. Our government recognizes that Ontario's municipalities are accountable, mature governments that can ably understand, represent and address their needs for the benefit of their residents.

The Respect for Municipalities Act, 2005, is a bill that, if passed, would be a groundbreaking demonstration of how our government is committed to treating municipalities with respect. Working with our municipal partners, we can maintain a quality of life in Ontario that is second to none.

ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY

INDUSTRIE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): Today is Environment Industry Day at Queen's Park, an opportunity for my colleagues to meet with some of Ontario's boldest entrepreneurs and environmental visionaries and learn about this vital industry in our great province.

What an industry it is. The provincial environment sector now includes more than 2,300 companies, with more than 60,000 jobs and revenues of almost \$7 billion. They are companies like Trojan UV, which uses ultra-

violet light to treat drinking water. This technology has been adopted all over the world. Another company here today is Hybridyne Power Systems, which is improving the efficiency of wind turbines so they capture more wind energy. The potential for continued growth of companies like these is almost unlimited.

I want to thank the Ontario Environment Industry Association for organizing this day. In particular, I want to thank Mark Vanderheyden, the chair of ONEIA, and Ellen McGregor, chair of Environment Industry Day. ONEIA is a valued partner in our mission of raising awareness about the incredible potential of made-in-Ontario products and services.

In the 19th century, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Steam is no stronger now than it was a hundred years ago; but it is put to better use." There is still vast potential in the elements, it seems. Today, the same statement is true for sunlight and wind power, which indeed we are putting to better use. It is true of new fuels that will let us power our cars with a bushel of corn or heat our houses with energy from methane from an old landfill.

New environmental technologies promote the values that business loves most: They are efficient, they create markets where none existed before, they create value, and perhaps most importantly, they are sustainable. Ontario businesses understand implicitly that we have huge opportunities for growth in this sector.

Les entreprises de notre province comprennent d'emblée que les possibilités de croissance sont considérables dans ce secteur.

If government sets an example, business will rise to the challenge. Industry will find innovative solutions and technologies to meet our society's needs in this most complex and fascinating time. Of course, there's still more we can do to give Ontarians the choices they deserve—the necessary options for life in the 21st century—for our good health, the health of our communities and our province's economy.

We must continue to harness and use our expertise and experience here at home to make Ontario's economy as productive and competitive as possible. We need to share our accomplishments with others who can benefit from them by marketing Ontario's environment know-how around the world.

We all recognize the vital role of research and innovation. Of course, the Premier knows this best. He has made this a priority by establishing a ministry for this very reason, and I am proud to follow his lead and work with our partners to build and grow a culture of innovation within the environmental industry.

If Ontario is to have and keep the best and brightest minds and the highest quality of life in the world, we need to embrace innovation in every way.

Si nous souhaitons avoir et conserver les plus brillants cerveaux et la meilleure qualité de vie au monde, nous devons acquérir l'innovation sur tous ses aspects.

What's good for the environment is good for business. Companies that reduce their energy consumption help reduce air pollution and greenhouse gases while saving

millions in electricity costs. Companies that reduce packaging can cut costs by producing less waste. More and more, companies are finding that sustainability and social responsibility give them a competitive advantage.

This week in Montreal, delegates from all over the world are gathering to address the enormous challenge of climate change. I will join them next week and, as Ontario's new Minister of the Environment, I look forward to working alongside my colleague the Honourable Minister of Energy, Donna Cansfield, in bringing Ontario's message to the world.

1420

This government has undertaken a number of initiatives that will not only help to improve Ontario's air quality but will make a major contribution to Canada's meeting its greenhouse gas reduction commitments under the Kyoto Protocol.

If we have the world's best environmental industry in Ontario but we don't have the will to use it to its greatest potential, our potential is wasted. Similarly, if people want to make environmental choices but technology hasn't caught up to their dream, they will be disillusioned.

Today, on Environment Industry Day, we need to spread the word that in Ontario there is both the will and the way. We have the spirit for change and the ability to enable it.

New, cleaner technology is allowing us to make hundreds of environmentally conscientious decisions. It could be as small as buying an energy-efficient appliance or as great as replacing our coal-fired electricity with newer, greener technology. Every step is made possible by the continuous advances of the environmental industry.

I am proud to partner with the Ontario Environment Industry Association today and every day. I am proud to be part of a forward-thinking government, and I am proud to look ahead to a cleaner, greener 21st century. I want to encourage my colleagues, if they have not already done so, to find an opportunity to hear how vital the association's members are to the future of our economy and how they have and will continue to contribute to a cleaner, greener and healthier Ontario.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I just want to respond briefly to the announcement made today about the 1,000 police officers by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I just note that last Friday the minister had his eighth photo-op in two years about this announcement. Today is the ninth time he has announced that, and he falls short.

I remember sitting through seven all-candidates meetings in my riding in the 2003 provincial election, and it was pretty clear that the Liberals were going to pay 100% of 1,000 new police officers in this province. Today and last Friday, when we finally get the final details, we learn they're paying \$35,000 per police offi-

cer. Everyone knows that a police officer, fully equipped, costs over \$100,000—in fact \$109,000. So you're paying one third of what you promised the people of Ontario.

Municipalities have not seen a penny to date, including the 400 retroactive officers that this government has bragged about. I'll note that there are disappointed detachments today. In the GTA alone, York region had asked for 291 officers, and they're going to get only 100. Peel region asked for 168 officers, and they're going to get only 97. Durham region asked for 77, and they're going to get only 50. Halton region asked for 64, and they're going to get only 34. This is another broken promise by the McGuinty government. You're paying for one third of police officers rather than 100% like you promised.

MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I just wanted to reply to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the no respect for taxpayers act that he introduced in the House today. As we look at the bill—and this is a compendium to the bill, which says the bill proposes to “allow the province to give municipalities new fiscal authority.” The bill does not propose to directly extend any new revenue tools to municipalities. Minister, the municipalities already can administer the money they're getting. The problem is that they want more taxation ability.

Now, I just wanted to read the line from the statement that's slightly reversed. The minister read this into the record, and I'd like to read it again: “The Respect for Municipalities Act, 2005, is a bill that, if passed, would be a groundbreaking demonstration of how our government is committed to” tax and spend and now allow the municipalities to help them do it.

I think it's very important to recognize that on November 15, our leader, John Tory, asked the minister about holding a referendum if they forced municipalities to increase taxes that were not allowed under the Taxpayer Protection Act. The minister was unable at the time to answer it, but now, all of a sudden, he has realized that our leader was right: It requires a referendum. So he has decided to change the legislation so they can tax on the provincial government's behalf. I think this is wrong, Mr. Minister.

ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to stand today in response to Environment Industry Day, and also to welcome the Minister of the Environment back to Queen's Park and congratulate her on the birth of her twin boys.

I'm also pleased, on behalf of our leader John Tory and our PC caucus, to welcome the Ontario Environment Industry Association to Queen's Park today. Tonight they are holding their sixth reception at Queen's Park.

The Ontario Environment Industry Association represents almost 2,400 companies, with revenues of almost \$7 billion. Overall, our environment sector in Ontario

employs almost 65,000 people. This is a growing business sector and there are many innovative and creative solutions being put into practice in Ontario, and we, as lawmakers, should be learning more about them.

ONEIA members are at the forefront of working for a cleaner and greener Ontario. Their members are concerned with everything affecting our air, our land and our water. The member companies are concerned with pollution and waste management, renewable energy, water use and soil remediation, among other things. They provide evidence that what's good for the environment is good for business and good for the province of Ontario.

This is a government that talks about the importance of the environment, but they are often hollow words. There is a lack of real and practical solutions that help businesses to succeed. There are still regulatory hurdles and barriers to the introduction of new technology in this field. There are no incentive programs in place for businesses to adopt more environmentally sensitive solutions.

I welcome the ONEIA members who are here today and encourage MPPs to meet with members of ONEIA and attend the reception tonight. I also want to welcome Doug Galt to the gallery.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I want to respond to the Minister of the Environment. I too would like to welcome her back to the Legislature and congratulate her on the birth of her twins. I'm looking forward to seeing them.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Be gentle, Marilyn.

Ms. Churley: I will. In fact, this is your first day back and it looks like my last day here, so I'm not going to have much opportunity to go at you; I was looking forward to it.

Ontario's environmental industries play an important role in helping us reach our desire of truly sustainable development. We have some of the best right here in Ontario, and we're very proud of the innovation they are showing us. We have numerous environmental challenges today, but perhaps none as great as those associated with climate change, as well as other environmental problems. We need our environmental industries to provide the know-how and innovation to allow us to build an environmentally sustainable and prosperous future in Ontario. We also need to have in place the kind of rigorous environmental law and policy framework that will not just see polluters meet best practices but drive polluting industries to work with our environmental industries to innovate new environmental technologies for marketing on the global level, and we know they can do that; they have proven it.

For example, it is incredible that Ontario does not have a toxic use reduction act that would make pollution prevention plans mandatory and require companies to reduce their use and emissions of toxic chemicals. More progressive American jurisdictions are doing this. Setting high standards actually drives innovation, and we must keep the bar moving to create the space for Ontario's environmental industries to prosper and grow and to take their Ontario-developed technologies to the entire world.

MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I'm responding to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. As I listened to him today, I was reminded of the old saying attributed to Socrates. It went something like this: I would gladly be persuaded by you, sir, but not against my better judgment.

I was listening to what you had to say. This is a bill to remove a provision of a municipal referendum. That's all this bill does. It doesn't give any powers to municipalities; it just means they don't have to go out and ask for a referendum. It's a good thing they don't have to go out and ask for a referendum. I know that the City of Kawartha Lakes came out and asked for a referendum and held the referendum, and the minister said he would be bound by it. But what does he do? He ignores it. So I don't think there's much here for a municipality at all, if that is the experience they are to live under.

1430

What is here is not going to assist municipalities. It's not going to help them gain extra tax monies. These municipal corporations, the mayor and the councillors are going to be given very limited tools, but they're going to take a lot of flak and a lot of heat if they try to use them. The minister knows full well the difficulty of trying to raise taxes. Where the minister should be going with all of this, if he were to do it right, would be to let the municipalities not be bound by your rapacious instincts when it comes to their taxes. Minister, you know full well that the province of Ontario each and every year takes some \$9 billion to \$10 billion directly out of municipal coffers, from property taxes. You take the money for education, welfare and ODSP. You take the money for public housing and the money for child care. You take \$9 billion to \$10 billion, which municipalities had heretofore relied upon, and you use it for yourself.

Rather than your saying, "We should upload some of these services and give you a tax break," which is really what they need to have happen, you take the totally easy way out by saying to them, "You can raise taxes. You can get the public flak. We don't have to do it. We'll continue here to take the money from the side that people don't really understand is going to the province."

I think what is here is really much ado about nothing. Here is an opportunity for the minister to say that he's trying to help municipalities, AMO and all of those people who are elected to public office in the regions and municipalities, but what he's really doing is hiding behind the fact that he has the easy way out. If this government has the easy way out, they continue the download, they continue to take money from municipal coffers and in reality are doing very little to give it back.

TRIBUTE TO MEMBERS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent from all parties to speak for up to five minutes to recognize the

members for Toronto–Danforth, Nepean–Carleton and Whitby–Ajax, and for each of these three members to have a short response.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley asked for unanimous consent for up to five minutes for each party in respect of the three members he outlined. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, if I may begin, the first thing I want to say is that none of this can be used in any election pamphlet. Second, to be fair, none can be used by any opponent. When we speak in this House, we have a certain immunity from things that happen outside this House, so we'll ask that.

The first question I ask is, why on earth would these three people—Jim Flaherty, John Baird and Marilyn Churley—want to leave a House such as this and all the good friends here? They've had a long and distinguished career. When you look at politics today and how quickly people move in and out of elected bodies, these three individuals have actually been here now for a lengthy period of time. Norm Sterling and I, probably Bob Runciman—Tony Ruprecht may not agree that it's as long as some others, but it's a long period of time and each one has made a contribution to this House.

One of the ways you judge the contribution is by how annoyed people have become with them over the years. Using that criterion, all three have distinguished themselves in this House. But we debate and we disagree in this House. I think it's because each one of these individuals has put forward a position, and put it forth very forcefully and vehemently, not only for the members of this House but to the people of Ontario. Each one of these three people has not been afraid to be labelled as "ideological." In a time when people want to be in the mushy middle, as we always say, suffice to say Jim Flaherty and John Baird would not at all be taken aback by being called "right-wing" and "ultra-Conservative." They're proud of that label and have lived that label since they entered this House. Marilyn Churley is not afraid to be called "left-wing"; I wouldn't say "socialist," but "socially democratic." That is something that's different in many Houses of assembly today: the fact that people don't want to have those labels put on. But each one of these individuals has spoken from a position of principle. Some in the society, some in this House, may disagree with what they've had to say, but all three of them have been individuals who have been outspoken on the issues which mean so very much to them and, of course, on behalf of their constituencies.

All have also served in both government and opposition, and so have a good perspective on how a legislative body works. They're an indication of the high quality of members that we have in this House. I know everybody thinks that if you make it to the federal House, somehow that's the best place in the world, but our provincial Legislatures have people who are distinguished in many ways themselves.

All three have been cabinet ministers. I notice that Marilyn Churley was Minister of Consumer and Com-

mercial Relations from 1991 to 1995. I'm trying to remember who was minister before you. I think it was—

Interjection: Peter Kormos.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Oh, it was Peter Kormos. I know Jim Flaherty has been the Attorney General of the province; he's been Minister of Labour; he's been Minister of Innovation, Enterprise and—

Interjection: Finance.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: He's been Minister of Finance, and he's been the Deputy Premier of the province of Ontario.

John Baird has been the chief government whip; he's been the government House leader; he's been an opposition House leader; he's been a minister in several different portfolios. Both of these gentlemen have a breadth of knowledge of the provincial government. All three, again, in the debates that have taken place publicly in our society in Ontario, have made a major contribution. The issues have been advanced because they've been prepared to put them before the public in a very frank and forthright manner.

I appreciate the fact that they have taken time out of their personal lives to serve in public life. It isn't easy to do. Each of these people, as I look at them, are individuals who, outside of a legislative body, outside of the body politic, could have been very successful if they had chosen another occupation rather than being an elected representative. But each has had the public good first and foremost in mind and has made a decision to serve in this Legislature, and I'm sure each one now goes forward hoping to serve in yet another elective body. We wish them well in their personal lives.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I notice that the former speaker didn't say anything that anybody can use in any election campaign.

It's a great honour for me to say a few words about three individuals who are energetic, who have participated in the process and who represent their constituents so well. I believe that each one of them has a very good chance of victory in the upcoming federal election.

Marilyn Churley came here in 1990, and I've known her as a minister and in opposition over that period of time. No one in this House can say that she doesn't do her job. She does her job with emotion, with great energy and with a lot of drive, and works very hard at what she does. Her only mistake was that she passed up her chance at immortality, because in 1994, when she was the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, I went to her on behalf of a number of golf course owners and asked her if she would consider putting beer on the golf course. She didn't go through with that, and if she had, she would have been immortal; she would have been known forever in this province. Now, she also allowed me a great opportunity to become immortal when I became the minister of that particular portfolio.

Interjection: I think the wrong member's leaving.

Mr. Sterling: John Baird is with us, and his mom Marianne Baird is with us in the gallery. Marianne, maybe you could stand up, and everybody would acknowledge you.

Applause.

Mr. Sterling: Many of us in this Legislature wish you had been here watching over your son more frequently.

I first learned about John Baird when Marianne submitted her application for his birth certificate. John always claimed that I signed his birth certificate. Actually, when I was first elected, John was eight years of age. I have got to know the family; Marianne has lived in my constituency before.

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John has been a tremendous, tremendous young star, not only for the Conservative Party but for the Legislature of Ontario. John served as president of the YPC some time ago. I can never forget Mike Harris and I going down to London, Ontario, and participating in the conference when he was first elected. He participated in campaigns and then, of course, his own campaign in 1995.

Since that time, John has occupied the riding adjacent to mine, and in 1999, when there was redistribution, John took over part of the area that I represented. I always claimed that the reason he got such a plurality was that the people thought they were still voting for me in that constituency. Not so; they were voting for John, and John has just done a tremendous job and will offer, no doubt, to the Parliament of Canada tremendous strength both as a member and perhaps as a cabinet minister in the next government.

Jim Flaherty came to me in 1995, after winning his first election, as my parliamentary assistant at the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. I immediately knew that Jim was going to be a rising star. He was going to succeed as a parliamentarian, and he was going to succeed and become a cabinet minister and perhaps the leader of our party at some future date. We know of his great success during that period of time.

Jim is blessed with a wonderful wife, Christine, who is a member of the law society as well, a lawyer, and three sons—triplets. So during his period of time here, he's not only shown his energy in what he has done here but has also shown his energy back home in taking care of his three boys: John, Galen and Quinn.

Jim, you've done a tremendous job for our party. John, you've done a tremendous job for our party here. I know you're going to do a tremendous job in the Parliament of Canada. The great part about it is that the next sojourn for all three of you will be pensionable time.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): It's been said our political institutions work remarkably well. They are designed to clang against each other; the noise is democracy at work. It's my honour and privilege today on behalf of New Democrats to pay tribute to three MPPs who have certainly clashed and certainly clanged on just about all the issues, but at the end of the day have made democracy work better here in the province of Ontario. I'd like to say a few words about each of them.

I remember when a certain guy named Jim Flaherty was first elected. I remember that he, as a result of a certain event that happened, where we sat all night and

the Legislature couldn't vote, and it had something to do with a member who's no longer a member, something about a bottle—anyway, Mr. Flaherty was quite upset. So he brought in a private member's bill that said that particular member and his bottle were kicked out of the House. I remember that part.

Mr. Flaherty was so upset about the procedures being stalled, delayed because, under the rules, someone refused to vote and they so equipped themselves that they didn't have to leave the chamber to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night. Mr. Flaherty brought a private member's bill that said that if you were kicked out of the House, you were docked your pay.

He was quite proud of this private member's bill, but like a lot of new members, he hadn't bothered to read the rules. So he brought his private member's bill here. He had all of the newly elected Conservative caucus vote for it and thought he was going to have this passed into law, when a bunch of New Democrats stood and denied a final vote. He was furious. He was absolutely furious. I remember he was cursing at some of us. Our response to him was, "Mr. Flaherty, read the rules." Of course, he read the rules, and he found that in terms of a private member's bill, if a certain number of members stood and denied the vote, that could happen. He was very angry that day, but let me say this about the member for Whitby-Ajax: He obviously went home that night and read the rules backwards and forwards. I don't think anyone ever caught him on the rules in this Legislature after that event.

It's unusual that somebody who was elected in 1995 would very quickly be Minister of Labour; go on from that to be Minister of Finance; go on from that to be Deputy Premier; and go on from that and run very quickly in a leadership campaign. Jim Flaherty accomplished all of those things. I think we need to recognize that in a very short time here, Mr. Flaherty has certainly made his mark.

I will never be accused of having shared many views with Mr. Flaherty, and no one would ever accuse me of having a shared political philosophy with him, but I just discovered I did have one thing in common with him: We both love to play hockey. Mr. Flaherty played at Princeton; I played at Dartmouth. I must say, I got to recognize his method of playing hockey: head up, elbows out and always charge the net. If I can say, in a parting commendation of Mr. Flaherty, I think now, with Mr. Flaherty playing right wing on the Conservative line in Ottawa, Stephen Harper may at last be able to say that he skates closer to centre ice.

Jim, we wish you all the best. You've indeed left your mark here in the 10 years that you were elected to the Ontario Legislature.

I want to say a few words about John Baird. John is another one of those people who was here, relatively speaking, for a short time. There are many of us who have been here a lot longer, yet John Baird is someone else who has left his mark. The two single events that I remember about John the most are, again, when the

Conservative government tried to force through their legislation to amalgamate the city of Toronto. Some of us dreamed up the idea of presenting 10,000 amendments—

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Fourteen.

Mr. Hampton: Eventually, it came to be about 14,000 amendments. Of course, we sat here night and day, night and day, night and day, for I think it was 10 days.

John Baird was one of those people who I think read every book on parliamentary procedure. If I remember correctly, about every hour or so Mr. Baird would be on his feet, "Point of order," pointing out why this process should be terminated and why the legislation should be allowed to proceed. John is another one who learned the rules, and learned them very quickly. As a result, he became Minister of Community and Social Services, and then finally the job that I liked most for him, Minister of Energy. I remember the day he was appointed Minister of Energy, I said to him, "Does Ernie Eves hate you?" John wasn't sure.

Mr. Baird: Oh, I was sure.

Mr. Hampton: The part that I liked the best, when he was Minister of Energy, was when the government that was going to deregulate and privatize our electricity system suddenly, on November 11, 2002, decided, "Oops. This is not going very well. We're going to completely re-regulate the electricity system." Then, in a furtherance of that activity on November 13, the Minister of Energy, John Baird, proceeded to hold a press conference in Oakville talking about energy conservation. On that particular day, that press conference—and I'll just read the coverage from the press: "A giant lizard dubbed 'Hydrozilla' taunted Ontario's energy minister today, derailing the Conservative government's stage-managed campaign to ease consumer concerns about high electricity prices and limited power supply."

"The rubber-suited monster—a creation of the New Democrats—hovered behind John Baird as he unveiled a series of initiatives to promote conservation."

"It's never too late to shut off that light," said the energy minister."

John, as you turn the lights out on this part of your political career, we again thank you for your spirited, dedicated service in this place. We wish you well, and we mean that most sincerely. You've left your mark here, and I suspect you're going to leave your mark federally as well.

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Finally, I want to pay tribute to the member from Toronto-Danforth, the NDP environment critic, women's issues critic and deputy leader, Marilyn Churley.

Energy, skill and integrity distinguish Marilyn's respected and accomplished political achievements. Over her 15-year career in this place, Marilyn has rightly earned a reputation for getting things done and has been recognized by both community and political leaders and the general public as a knowledgeable critic and advocate on a wide range of issues.

She was the first woman to be Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations and the first woman to be

Deputy Speaker of the Ontario Legislature. She's been a strong voice for women. She's been a strong voice for health care. She's been a strong voice for arts and culture. She's been a strong voice for families. Just weeks ago, Marilyn's hard work and advocacy paid off when Ontario passed into law new adoption disclosure laws.

Most of all, Marilyn is a strong voice for the environment. She's been at the forefront of some of the most important and influential environmental legislation in the history of our province. Her Safe Drinking Water Act, designed to prevent another Walkerton tragedy, was so popular that the previous Conservative government brought in a similar bill based on her work.

New Democrats and all Ontarians who believe in what we do here and what happens in this place will miss Marilyn Churley. We will miss her commitment to the community, her dogged determination and her passion for doing right for people and the environment.

I think I can speak for other parties when I say with great confidence and conviction that I sincerely hope our loss will be a gain for all Canadians.

Marilyn, thank you for your years of service and your hard work. I say to you: Farewell, and give Paul Martin hell.

The Speaker: I am going to give each of the members—I guess “rebuttal” would be the right word.

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby–Ajax): I would like to thank everyone for their kind remarks today. It almost makes me want to stay, but I won't. Don't worry about that. I will make sure I go.

It's been 10 and a half years since I was elected to this place, which still means I'm kind of a rookie compared to Bradley, Sterling and Runciman. John Baird and I have done our best to represent the caring, compassionate part of the Tory caucus here, and we're now pleased to pass the torch to Bill Murdoch and Bob Runciman, who can carry that forward for us.

I've tried to bring forward policies that would of course promote inclusion and optimism. I helped promote Canadian unity. Some of you will remember the fairness is a two-way street legislation, encouraging Ontario workers to work in Quebec back in about 1990—it helped get John Baird elected in Ottawa—privatizing the LCBO, making unions more democratic and my proposals to help the homeless. These were so popular that I would go from place to place in those days and there would be throngs, crowds of people screaming, I thought in adulation, in support of the policies. That's what my staff told me, but I understand it was not all true.

I did get calls from time to time when I was Attorney General from hardware store people, the chain stores and so on, complaints about the decline in sales of buckets and squeegees but, at another time, compliments from the food business for an increase in sales of waffles. Caplan remembers that waffle thing. I still have it in the garage if you want to use it. I should offer it to the press gallery for

the auction on Wednesday night. I still have that big waffle there.

I get asked from time to time why I ran for leader of our party, and now that I'm leaving I can be frank and open about that, I guess. I ran for the leadership because I was assured—in fact, Norm Sterling assured me—that it would heighten my stature, and I thought I could use all the help I could get. The reward I got for that leadership race was being named to a ministry that I still don't understand: MEIO or MEOI or whatever. It had something to do with travel and maybe a bit to do with exile at that time in my political career.

I have been honoured to serve in a lot of cabinet jobs, as Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance, Attorney General, Minister of Labour and other things, demonstrating my inability to hold a job for more than about 18 or 19 months during my time here. But I have strived to represent the people of Whitby always, and sometimes part of Oshawa and sometimes part of Ajax. I'm proud of our new university in Durham region, of the Durham skills centre in Whitby, the expansion to GO and the 401, the Durham Regional Cancer Centre that is under construction and the environmental protection of the Lynde Marsh—all of those good things that happened when Durham region, east of Toronto, got some attention when we were in government.

Now I'm doing probably the best thing I could do for my constituents; that is, I've figured out, watching the federal Liberals, that what you need is an election to get a lot of stuff for your riding. So I am going to resign, causing a by-election in Whitby–Ajax, which I'm sure will result in provincial Liberal largesse in the riding for the Ajax-Pickering hospital, for Lakeridge Health, get the cancer centre completed, and even, Mr. Caplan, the Durham consolidated courthouse. I'm doing all this to help my constituents.

Interjections.

Mr. Flaherty: I will accomplish more by leaving. Yes, you're right.

Obviously, I thank Christine, my wife, who was named Whitby Citizen of the Year last Thursday night, which is a great honour for her. I thank her.

As we all know, politics is wearing on the family. Our triplet sons, John, Galen and Quinn, have been terrific. They asked me whether I was taller when I went into politics. I said, “Yes, I was six feet, four inches, but it wears you down over time in this place.”

I thank the Liberal government and Dalton McGuinty for raising the issue of fiscal imbalance and convincing people that it's important to the people of Ontario, because we're certainly going to run on that in the next six weeks or so.

I will say, finally, that I recall debate in this place in 1996 or 1997, in the afternoon. I was on the government backbench and talking about something or other and I heard the usual stage whisper from the member for St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley, to Mr. Conway, who was here at that time. It was something like, “He really believes that stuff.” I can assure you that I did believe those Conservative principles then, I believe them now and I look

forward to advancing them in another place. Thank you, Speaker.

Mr. Baird: I first want to thank the member for St. Catharines, the leader of the third party, and my good friend the member for Lanark–Carleton, especially for recognizing my mother who came for a surprise visit at Queen's Park today. Norm did sign my birth certificate. Norm was elected when I was eight years old. He doesn't tell people that he first ran for this place when I was two years old. He has certainly been at this for many, many years.

It is with mixed feelings that I rise to make some comments today. A part of me is tremendously excited by a new opportunity to make a difference for my home town in the federal government, although another part of me has a certain degree of sadness on leaving this place. This job has been far more rewarding than I could ever have expected.

In government, my proudest accomplishment was working with Mike Harris, who changed politics, who did what he said he would do. That is something that I am tremendously proud of.

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I'm proud to have advocated for new schools in my riding. We will be opening the 11th new school in Nepean–Carleton on Wednesday, which is very exciting for families in my area.

I'm proud to have worked with my good friend Norm Sterling in advancing the cause of Highway 416, which was one of the only major capital projects that went forward anywhere in the province in our first term.

I'm tremendously proud to have worked very hard to see the Queensway Carleton Hospital expanded and its budget dramatically increased.

I'm also proud of our success as a government in reducing the welfare rolls, which really empowered hundreds of thousands to move from welfare to work. That is indeed something I'm tremendously proud to have worked on.

I'm very pleased to have worked on advancing the cause of people with developmental disabilities: supports for them and their families. This probably has been the most rewarding part of my professional life. I was pleased to have attended an event with that community with the Minister of Community and Social Services just the other day.

I'm looking forward to going to Ottawa with my friend Flaherty, though I hope the sojourn we're on together is less of a career-limiting move than the last sojourn that we undertook. The member for Whitby–Ajax always likes to remind me that I am, in the history of the Commonwealth, the first associate minister where there was no minister or ministry. People would say, "Who is the minister?" and I would say, "Well, there isn't one." They would say, "Who is the former minister?" "That would be me." And never call the party leader a serial waffler. A good lesson.

I wish my leader all the very the best in the months ahead. He continues to have my respect and admiration. I look forward to working with him in the years to come.

A special word to the Premier, who represents the riding beside me: I genuinely look forward to working with you in the months ahead for the benefit of the people of Ontario. A new government in Ottawa won't be the solution to every problem, but I think it will bring a constructive approach to begin to address some of the many challenges you have rightly campaigned on throughout the province.

I look forward to working with my colleague Ms. Churley, the member for Toronto–Danforth. I look forward to working where I'm going to be spending a lot of time, with the junior member for Ottawa West–Nepean. I've been stalking him at community events in his riding throughout the last six months. I look forward to working with him.

I want to thank all my colleagues in caucus, who have been a tremendous privilege to work with. I want to thank everyone at the table whom I've had a growing relationship with over the last 10 years, all those around Queen's Park who make this such a tremendously privileged place to work, and I thank those in the public service for their support over the years. I've been blessed by having a very supportive riding association and executive, now led by Rich McDonald.

I want to give special thanks to my staff over the years. I've been very fortunate to have an outstanding group of men and women in support, especially my good friends Chris Froggatt and Cara Salci, who will embark on this new journey tomorrow. I'm also pleased that Matt Gibson, one of my former staff, is with us here in the House today.

Most importantly, I want to thank tremendously the people of Nepean and the people of Nepean–Carleton for the great privilege they have given me to serve them. I will be eternally grateful. Thank you.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I just have to rebut or say something in response to the member for Nepean–Carleton. Because of his government, I was able to save 11 schools in the east end of Toronto from closure that you guys were trying to close down. Because of you guys, I don't have to go out and buy especially warm clothes for a winter campaign, because of the warm boots and warm jacket and scarf and mitts and everything I bought for all the winter protests and strikes and everything that went on under his government. So I'm well prepared for this winter election.

I want to make sure I don't forget to acknowledge some people who are here today who are very special. The first person I want to introduce to you is Bill Boertjes, who is sitting here and who is my birth son, who inspired the years of bringing adoption disclosure bills before this House. I'm glad that he's here today, and I do want to take this opportunity to thank the minister for bringing forward the bill. I want to thank the delay in the election in Ottawa for keeping us here so I had the opportunity to stand on my feet and vote for it. I want to thank all of you who supported me over the years, and particularly to the government for making it a reality. It's a nice legacy for me to leave. Thank you for that.

I also want to introduce Louise Moran, who is sitting there, and has been with me for a number of years in my constituency office; Jasmyan Singh, who is my executive assistant; Manna Wong, who has worked with me since I was elected, is in China—her father is ill; and Christine Kemp—all incredible staff. We all know in this place that it's our staff who make us look good every single day. I want to thank them for all of their hard—except for George Smitherman, of course. It's always about George. But I think we would all agree that it's our staff who make us seem as smart as we are—some days. Even they, on other days, just can't do it for us.

I want to also mention my daughter, Astra Crosby, who could not be with us today, and my grandchildren, her son James and my stepgrandchildren, Savana and Kiern, who do not get to see me nearly enough, because we all know how hard we work in this place and in our communities. My family, I'm sure, like everybody here, are very special to me, and without them we could not do what we're doing. I owe my family a lot of thanks for putting up with me and being there for me whenever I need them; and to my partner, Richard, as well.

I'm not going to say too much. I just want to take this opportunity, first of all, to thank all of the staff in the Legislative Assembly: the table officers; the Clerk's office; Mr. Speaker, all the staff who work under you; the media; the broadcasting people; the cleaning staff; the cafeteria staff; all of the parking attendants—and I could go on and on. They're all tremendous. I've been able to form warm, personal relationships with many people in this place from all walks of life over the years. We all appreciate what you do for us on a day-to-day basis. I am going to miss you very much, and I want to thank you for all of your support over the years and always being there whenever I had a question. Sometimes I didn't like the answer from the table, but thank you, all of you.

I also want to thank all of my colleagues here. Some of you are newer to me, some older, and I mean that in both senses with some of you. Again, we are on different sides of the House. Something that people don't know, usually, when they see us sparring every day—and I admit, I can be as good as the best of them for being partisan and sparring, and I'm sure you're glad to see the back of me; admit it. But I will miss you. I've learned a lot in this place; I've learned from each and every one of you. We all bring something to this place, and even though we differ in our approaches and our politics, I can say about every single person here that we're all here for the same reason, and that is to serve our constituents.

That leads me finally to my constituents in Toronto—Danforth. When I first was elected here, it was called Riverdale, then the name was changed to Broadview—Greenwood and now it's Toronto Danforth. I do want to say to them that it's been an absolute honour to be elected handily for four elections in that riding. The faith that people have put in me has been truly appreciated, and I'm honoured by it. I want to say to those constituents, I will be just on the other side of Coxwell; I won't be that far away. All of the accomplishments I have achieved that you hear people talking about, I did

not achieve alone, as none of us do; it was through working in partnership with my constituents in Toronto—Danforth, just a tremendous community that is welcoming to all. Although we haven't always agreed on approaches to everything, we've always been up front and honest with each other, and have always been able to work together to achieve what is best for our communities. So I say to them in particular, thank you for putting your faith in me. It's been a real honour to have worked with you for 15 years as your MPP.

With that, I say that I'm very excited about the next journey of my life, and I'm hoping to have dinner with Jim Watson in Ottawa; he's already invited me. And maybe we can go for a run together or something, or a skate.

Mr. Speaker, it has been an honour and a privilege to have served in this place for 15 years. Thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would seek unanimous consent to have question period last its full one hour.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has asked for unanimous consent for question period to run the full one hour. Agreed? Agreed.

1510

ORAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds—Grenville): In 15 minutes, you may want a motion for reconsideration.

My question is to the Premier. Premier, do you think it's appropriate that taxpayer dollars are being spent to distribute crack cocaine kits in Toronto, given that half of all homicides in the city, according to Toronto police, are due to gangs fighting over this illegal drug?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I know that members of Mr. Runciman's party have raised this issue in the past, and we've been very clear that that is fundamentally an issue to be decided by the municipal government of Toronto.

The member will know that we are making tremendous efforts to help grapple with the crime issue as it presents itself, especially in the city of Toronto. But again, that particular issue falls within the purview of the city of Toronto itself.

Mr. Runciman: Premier, we've obtained a so-called harm reduction kit that's being handed out now by the Queen West Community Health Centre in downtown Toronto. These are the very centres to which you gave a \$14-million funding increase in your first budget. This kit is a step-by-step guide for crack cocaine addicts, complete with a crack pipe and detailed instructions on how to smoke crack; condoms; and a list of helpful hints, which include

"Pay your bills before you score.

"When doing sex work, try to make your money before you get high, and

"Clean your crack plate regularly."

Premier, why are Ontario taxpayers being stuck with the bill for enabling illegal drug use?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Health, Speaker.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Before the honourable member comes to the conclusion that community health resources are involved in that, I believe we need to take a good, hard look at public health dollars and their application.

Long-standing debates have taken shape in the city of Toronto and, more recently, in Ottawa related to the reduction of transmission related to drug use. This is a challenging discussion. It's a discussion that occurs very regularly in the neighbourhoods where I live, and it is where we attempt to strike the balance between those circumstances related to drug use and the impact on communities, which we know is very, very severe; and the recognition as well that drug addiction is not simply a matter of criminal justice and application in community, but it's about health needs and health risks of individuals who are engaged in those risky pursuits. Accordingly, we attempt to strike a balance, and harm reduction has been part and parcel of that.

Mr. Runciman: The minister's response seems to be supportive of the Toronto drug strategy advisory committee to have the city of Toronto "expand ... harm reduction outreach strategies including the provision of equipment to support safer use of substances ... in particular, people who use crack cocaine."

Minister, if this report is adopted by the city, the money would come from Toronto Public Health, which is funded 65% by your government. Already, at least one community health centre in Toronto is using taxpayer-funded budgets to help distribute crack pipe kits to addicts.

Can you guarantee to us today that not one more cent of taxpayer dollars will be spent on distributing these kits, and further rule out any taxpayer dollars funding any initiative by the city to fund these kits? Will you give taxpayers that commitment today?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: As the honourable member himself has concluded, by the nature of the way that he asked the question, we have no certainty that there are any provincial dollars involved in those things. I've said before that Public Health has been an important provider of those services and, of course, the city of Toronto contributes quite a lot of additional resources to Public Health capacity.

I could tell the honourable member that we follow very, very closely the discussions that go on in a variety of jurisdictions. We've seen that in Ottawa, and we've seen that in Toronto. In this Legislature, twice in the last number of weeks I've been able to be very clear to you and to your colleague the opposition critic for health that, with respect to the city of Toronto's drug strategy, this is designed to generate a conversation that is taking place at the city of Toronto. Of course, like all of the discussions related to public health, we're following it very, very carefully.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Again, to the Premier: The Toronto Police Service says that half of all homicides in the city are related to gang warfare over crack cocaine. Now we see that taxpayer dollars are being spent to distribute crack pipes to addicts. Police in our cities have been stretched to the limit this year with a record number of gun-related murders, many of which are tied to fights over crack.

What is the sum total of your response? Eight photo ops announcing new police officers that won't be fully hired until the fall of 2007. Premier, why haven't you moved with urgency to get more officers on our streets? Why has it taken over two years to get to this point?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I know that the member will be very much aware of the multiplicity of initiatives that we've taken that will enhance enforcement-related issues within the city of Toronto itself. He will know that we've also invested in programs designed to attack some of the causes of crime. So our support for the city of Toronto, in particular, when it comes to addressing criminality, goes far beyond just putting more police on the streets, but we are very proud of that initiative.

We have made a very significant announcement. The city of Toronto itself will now benefit from a tremendous number of new police officers, because we believe in front-line enforcement, and we think that the people of Toronto are entitled to see more police patrolling their streets.

But again, our initiatives, when it comes to addressing crime issues within the city of Toronto, are much more, as the member himself well knows, and they've been underway for a great deal of time now. They extend far beyond the issue of putting more police on the streets themselves.

Mr. Runciman: There have been 71 homicides in Toronto this year. The majority of those homicides involve a gun. On Friday, we saw your minister make a long overdue announcement about the 1,000 new police officers, which you promised over two years ago, but now they're not going to be fully hired until October 2007.

Between 2000 and 2003, the former government increased the number of training spots for new police recruits by 100%. Now, if you are truly serious about getting these police officers on the streets today to help fight the violent crime which our communities are experiencing, why haven't you moved to immediately increase the number of training spots at the Ontario Police College to get the officers on the streets now?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the minister.

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I'd like to respond to the member's question. He should know that, as part of our program, we have provided funding for 400 officers that have been hired since October 23, 2003, going forward to March 31, 2006. Many of those 400 officers have already gone through the police college. Others are

already in the process of going through that police college. That is why we've provided this funding in that manner: to make sure that we have the ability to provide the training for those officers so that by the end of our mandate in 2007 we will have had all of those officers go through the police college, and they will be on the streets, serving the people of Ontario in the way that they should.

Mr. Runciman: We know it has been two years, and there's another two years to go. While you've been dithering, criminals have been acting, and people, especially young people, have been dying. You and your justice ministers were missing in action during a summer of death in Toronto, and now, over two years late, you announce 1,000 cops. But just wait: They won't be in place for another two years.

The reality is that you've been reducing recruit numbers at the Ontario Police College over the past two years, and if you'd kept your promise from day one, you could have had 1,300 new officers on the streets today.

Premier, communities have waited through eight press conferences over two years to see action on your policing promise. Why do they have to wait another two years?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: You should know that this program was a campaign promise. Then we had to do something that you didn't do; that is, get it right. We consulted with our police partners. We consulted with municipalities. We came up with a program that addresses the real concerns of policing in Ontario. We've provided 400 officers who have been hired since October 23, 2003. We provided funding of \$70,000 per officer for 60 spots in the north.

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We've also made sure that we redressed some of your inequities. To give you a perfect example, in your community policing partnership, you provided 22 officers to the city of Ottawa—22. We have provided 95. The reason for that is that your program somehow or other suited your purposes and didn't suit the purposes of the people of Ontario and the police services in Ontario.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Premier, last night, Citytv held a town hall meeting to raise the issue: What has gone wrong in our schools? Community activists, parents and youth all say that the Safe Schools Act should be scrapped, that it disproportionately affects minority youth, that it is unfair to special-needs students and that it throws at-risk students out of school and into the streets, where they really get into trouble. Even your own Ontario Human Rights Commission has found that the Safe Schools Act is unfair and discriminatory. My question is, why hasn't the McGuinty government scrapped the Safe Schools Act?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm very pleased with the announcement recently made by the Minister of Education which, for the first time, puts some reliable data before all of us with respect to actual numbers and the

actual impact of the safe schools legislation. Now that we have that information before us, we can take the time to properly consider the best way to move forward.

But there are a couple of principles that are really important that guide us as we move forward. The first principle is quite simply this: We believe that Ontario students have the right to a learning environment that is safe and free from unreasonable interruption. At the same time, we believe we've got a responsibility to ensure that those students who are removed from the classroom because they constitute some compromise to the safety of the other students or constitute an unreasonable interruption to the learning experience of other students have continuing learning opportunities.

Yes, we've got new information, we've got reliable data, but those are the principles that will guide us as we move forward.

Mr. Hampton: The Premier talks about information as if it's new. The Human Rights Commission had that information available over a year ago. The Human Rights Commission pointed out that expulsions and suspensions have gone through the roof since the Safe Schools Act. The Human Rights Commission pointed out that black youth, for example, were being unfairly targeted, that special-needs students were being unfairly targeted. That information has all been there.

In fact, I want to quote someone who said: "We find out that this bill is one of the thinnest pieces of legislation that could possibly be there, a fundamental exercise in disrespect for the education system, for parents, for students, for anyone truly concerned with safe schools." Do you know who said that? Your own Minister of Education said that over two years ago.

So the information has been there. The studies have been there. Why haven't you scrapped the Safe Schools Act?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To lend some accuracy to the information supplied by my friend opposite, there was some data collected relating to the city of Toronto alone, but this new information related to data from across the province that is brand new. The information related to the impact it has had on some of our students suffering from learning disabilities is also brand new.

I say to the leader of the NDP, we understand that there are some real issues connected with this legislation. Hearings are taking place as we speak. We want to collect the appropriate information. We now have reliable data. The only issue is, what is the best way to move forward? If there are specific recommendations that the member wishes to table with us, I say with the utmost sincerity that we'll be more than pleased to receive that advice.

Mr. Hampton: There too the Human Rights Commission and other bodies have come forward with lots of recommendations: First of all, scrap the Safe Schools Act and set up fully funded alternative programs for all suspended and expelled students; second, restore the youth outreach workers who were cut, the guidance councillors who were cut, the attendance councillors who were cut,

the social worker positions that were cut. Those have all been taken out of the school system. You've had advocates from Toronto's black communities come to you and say these things need to happen.

I'm left to ask the Premier, when the Human Rights Commission has told you this is wrong, when your own information tells you this is wrong, when you've got people coming forward saying, "This is the way to move," what's left to consult on, Premier, other than to dither and delay?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, you won't be surprised that I take issue with what is offered by my friend opposite. We have been doing a few things along the way. In fact, we've been accused by some of being much too activist in the field of public education since we earned the privilege of serving Ontarians as their government. For example, in our high schools alone we have now hired another 1,300 new teachers, including guidance councillors, and a very big part of their responsibility is to help kids stay in school. It's to ensure that they find success within the traditional school environment. So we are not sitting on our hands; we are working hard. We've made investments, and now we're taking the time to ensure that we get the next step right, as we protect the rights of students in school and the rights of students to ensure that they continue their learning opportunities.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Premier, last month you announced a \$6.5-billion deal with Bruce Power to refurbish an unreliable and very expensive fixer-upper nuclear plant. You must know that nuclear plants create lots of high-level toxic nuclear waste, and the waste remains a potential health hazard, safety hazard and security hazard for many thousands of years. Premier, since you want to generate more nuclear waste, can you tell ordinary families across Ontario how much more highly toxic nuclear waste your Bruce deal will generate and where you are going to store it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Energy, Speaker.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): Thank you for the question. As you know, the issue for waste management belongs within the federal government and the nuclear stations have been providing the dollars that are appropriate for the storage of that. There is now a detailed analysis that has been done by the waste committee, and that report has gone forward to the federal government.

Mr. Hampton: It's interesting how the McGuinty government, when it wants to blame the federal government, always finds them a handy target, and when it wants the federal government to take responsibility, they're always a handy target.

We know, however, that according to reports, Darlington may also be generating a lot more nuclear waste. In

its recent report, "Choosing a Way Forward," the Nuclear Waste Management Organization said there are basically two possible nuclear waste storage sites in Ontario: the Canadian Shield in northern Ontario or a swath of non-shield areas in southern Ontario like London, Hamilton-Niagara, Windsor-Sarnia and land that stretches from Kitchener-Waterloo to Barrie. So before the McGuinty government generates more nuclear waste, will you be straight with ordinary families across the province and tell them where you are going to store the nuclear waste? Will it be in the north, or will it be in the south?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: It is my understanding that each option was found to have distinct advantages, but none perfectly met all of the objectives that the citizens said were actually important. This again has gone on to the federal government and it is under their jurisdiction. Those decisions will be made in the near future.

Mr. Hampton: It's interesting that the McGuinty government now wants to say this is all federal, but just a short while ago the Minister of Natural Resources, your colleague, was in the *Globe and Mail*, where he said, "We don't like the idea of nuclear waste coming to northern Ontario." So far, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec have already said no to nuclear waste. So, since you're quite willing to comment, or some of your ministers are quite willing to comment, I'm going to ask the McGuinty government again: Tell ordinary families where the nuclear waste will end up. Will it be Atikokan, Terrace Bay, Chapleau, Kenora? Or will it be London, Hamilton-Niagara, Windsor-Sarnia or Kitchener-Waterloo? It seems to me that before you start going down the road of generating more nuclear waste, you should tell the people who are going to look after the nuclear waste for thousands of years.

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Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: It would be helpful if the member would identify that the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act actually requested that the committee examine three options. Those three options were deep geological disposal in the Canadian Shield, storage at nuclear reaction sites and centralized storage. That was their mandate. They came back and indicated that none of these options perfectly fits all of the requirements of the criteria of the act. They have now gone forward and sent that report to the federal government, and it may be that the member is not particularly pleased with the fact, but it is a federal jurisdiction. There is a mandate, there is an act and there have been consultations that have been taking place right across this province.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Premier, and it concerns the critical state of health care in Durham region, part of which I represent. Premier, what we did in the Conservative government was bring together the five hospitals in Durham region, which was done not without difficulty. We brought them together primarily into Lakeridge Health. Lakeridge

Health is unique in the province of Ontario because it has a rural component that is substantial and an urban component that is substantial. It is also a multi-site hospital. There is no other hospital in this province that has that description.

They caused a report to be done that was released on Friday, a report of the advisory panel to the board of trustees of Lakeridge Health by independent people. It paints a rather startling story. What it says is that, unless there is a renegotiation between your Ministry of Health and the hospital, patient services—basic patient services—must be reduced. Surely, this is not acceptable, Premier. I ask you to read the report and commit to a response to the report, within a reasonable—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate the honourable member's question. I would say a couple of things that I think are important. We have lots of work to do there, no doubt, but I think it's important to note a couple of things. Firstly, Lakeridge Health has received more than \$24 million in base budget adjustment, in a positive sense, since our government came to life. I'd like to remind the honourable member that when he was part of a government, Lakeridge actually saw a significant reduction in their budget. That hasn't occurred under our government. In fact, we've also offered stable, multi-year funding.

With respect to his assertion that Lakeridge is an anomaly in terms of its blend of hospitals, this is not entirely accurate. There are many multi-site hospitals that are serving both urbanized and rural areas. Associated with that is the JPPC work that I'd like to comment on in the supplementary.

Mr. Flaherty: I had asked for at least a commitment to read the report and respond. You'd think that the minister or the Premier would at least have the decency toward the people of Durham region to say, "Yes, we'll read the report, and yes, we'll respond to it within a reasonable time." Instead, do you know what they're doing? They have this idea of a LHIN. Do you know where a LHIN for central eastern Ontario is going to go from? From Victoria Park Avenue to Algonquin Park. They can't even get organizational meetings together because of the huge distances involved.

Let me say this: There's going to be a by-election in Whitby–Ajax after I resign. The Ajax–Pickering hospital has been waiting for their expansion money from this government. The community has raised the money. There's a public meeting in Whitby tomorrow night, because that hospital serves Whitby as well. My question is: When will we see the money from the provincial government to match the money raised by the good people of Ajax, Pickering and Whitby? Where's the money?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Oh, and we ask, when will the members of that party stand in their place and, for once, represent accurately the circumstances? The circumstances represented accurately are clear: In the dying days of your government, that honourable member and others, many of whom are no longer here, ran across the province of Ontario with their great big rubber cheques and promised the people of Ontario, in community after community, resources that they knew could not be available. We have made an unprecedented \$5-billion investment in expanding hospital capacity in this province.

With respect to the issues mentioned and the multi-site capacity, our government is working through the JPPC to make sure that the smaller hospitals in these multi-site organizations that this government introduced to the province's health care are appropriately considered so that we can define core services to give confidence to the people of Ontario that those small sites will live on and will prosper.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I have a question for the Premier. While the UN conference on climate change began today in Montreal, Canada's international climate change file is cluttered with the train wrecks of failed federal Liberal policy. In their infamous red book in the 1993 election, the Liberals promised to reduce CO₂ emissions to 5% below 1990 levels by 2000. But under their watch, CO₂ emissions have increased by over 20%. Your government too is failing Ontarians in similar fashion to your federal cousins. Last month, the David Suzuki Foundation said that Ontario does not have a climate change plan. The question is, when are you going to get it together and introduce a climate change plan for debate in this Legislature?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): As I indicated in my earlier remarks, the Minister of Energy and I very much look forward to attending that conference next week. Climate change is a real threat to the environment and to human health, and it certainly knows no boundaries. Our government has been, and continues to be, supportive of the federal government's decision to ratify the Kyoto accord, and we have signed an agreement with the federal government to address climate change. We have contributed our ministry's expertise to the federal government and are working along with other provinces to ensure that we develop a system to report greenhouse gas emissions. Most significantly of all, the commitment by this government to close our coal-fired generating facilities is one of the most significant contributions being made with respect to emissions of greenhouse gases in the country.

Ms. Churley: With all due respect, I asked the Premier a question about a climate change plan, not an

air quality plan. The David Suzuki Foundation knows that you broke your promise on closing the coal plants by 2007. But closing coal plants is different: It doesn't mean you have a plan for climate change.

Manitoba does have a plan. They have set targets beyond the federal targets aiming to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by up to 18% by 2010 and up to 23% by 2012. Manitoba is boldly setting targets and introducing energy efficiency programs like the Power Smart residential loan program, while Ontario has no plan whatsoever. Minister, I want to ask you again, will you introduce a plan, a real plan, for debate, including emissions reduction targets?

Hon. Ms. Broten: Certainly, the issues with respect to climate change are being specifically met as we close our coal-fired plants. It is somewhat surprising that the member indicates that there is no effect with respect to greenhouse gases, when closing our coal-fired plants will reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases by 30 million tonnes a year. That's a significant commitment with respect to the effect of greenhouse gases.

Other steps that our province has taken with respect to clean air in this province: Air quality is intrinsically linked to greenhouse gases. They both affect the quality of life here in our province. Our government has worked very hard to ensure that we will continue to have a healthy life in Ontario, and the Minister of Energy and I very much look forward to being part of the discussion and debate next week.

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COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. In the recent by-election in Scarborough–Rouge River, one of the issues raised by constituents as being of paramount importance was community safety. This is also a concern for the people in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh. Although the problems we face, taken as a whole, aren't nearly as severe as those in other jurisdictions, they are real and weigh heavily on those who live in communities like Cornwall and Akwesasne.

On Friday, you announced the details of our government's Safer Communities-1,000 Officers Partnership program. This program will, as the name implies, see 1,000 more police officers patrolling our streets. For this, I commend you. The people of this province have indicated that security is one of their top concerns, and you have addressed this.

Having more officers on the street is beneficial, but that does not address some of the specific concerns afflicting the communities of this province. Minister, can you tell me how this announcement will affect our organized response to specific issues like domestic abuse and dangerous offenders?

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member

from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh for his question. Not only are we funding 1,000 officers, but there were criteria for how those 1,000 officers were to be allotted. What we did was make sure that 500 of them would go to community safety. That's looking after street patrols, working with schools and looking after other areas like traffic enforcement. The other 500 addressed six key areas that we had identified, and that was important. When the police services across Ontario submitted their applications, they had to indicate how they were going to address those concerns that are important to us and, more importantly, important to the people of Ontario. I can tell you that when it comes to domestic violence, when it comes to dangerous offenders, those are two of the criteria that we have. It isn't just the—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary.

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: I'll wait till your supplementary.

Mr. Brownell: Knowing that there will be more police officers on our streets will certainly make people feel safer as they walk those streets, and knowing that some of these officers will be directly focusing on concerns such as guns, violence and domestic abuse will certainly make citizens sleep better as well.

Crime prevention is an issue we all agree must take precedence. People want to feel that their government is protecting them. Unfortunately, due to perception, circumstances and the occasional negative portrayal of police in popular culture, specific groups often feel they are singled out by our officers. In my community, as in many others across Ontario, this is often youth. It is essential that our police forces dialogue with our youth, making them aware of the responsibilities of police officers while simultaneously learning the concerns of our young people. Minister, can you explain to us how this program will address this issue?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: Again, when we designated how we wanted these officers placed, of the six target areas, two of them had to do with youth crime. The other one is guns and gangs. I can tell you that police services across Ontario have taken this to heart.

I was at a meeting this morning with our member from Etobicoke North, where we had an incredible group of people—the police, the religious community, the faith-based community and community workers. We took a look and said, "We have to interact with our youth. We have to get to the issues, not only to be tough on crime, but to be tough on the causes of crime." That is something that we are working on with our police partners and our community partners to make sure that we deal with this problem, which everybody acknowledges is very serious and which we have to make a concerted effort to solve.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is to the Minister of Health. Last Thursday's announcement about the future of LHINs and CCACs has raised sig-

nificantly more questions than you were able to answer last week. The media have reported concerns about the downloading of health care costs to these new entities.

In a management board document, management board actually expressed similar concerns about your plans. In fact, the document confirms that unaccounted-for in your year two costs were \$25 million to \$50 million in severance costs; \$7 million to \$14 million in additional legal costs; \$15 million to \$24 million in wage harmonization costs; and, perhaps the most stinging indictment, questions about the request not including a realignment of funding for ministry regional offices whose functions will now be taken over by LHINs.

Minister, we in this House would simply ask you if you would please come forward with a more detailed costing of what this plan is going to cost. Clearly, there are hundreds of millions of dollars over the next two years that are unaccounted for in any of your public statements or correspondence. When will we, the media and the public get those answers?

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Oh, I thought you were going to answer the question for me. Those answers—

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): At least he'd answer it.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: You're not even in your seat. You're not supposed to heckle at me like that.

I think the answer is pretty clear, because the answer was provided last week. Local health integration networks are coming to life, and of course there are costs associated with the construction of that structure, but we've already been achieving offsets against them. The best example I can point to is that more than \$20 million in costs related to district health councils are not being borne this year. Accordingly, those dollars are a beginning point of the contribution toward the cost of the local health integration network structure.

It's crucial that we deliver on the award system in our province by creating more capacity for community engagement in health care decision-making. Last week, I answered to the honourable member's leader that all of the costs associated with local health integration networks will be dealt with from within our government's current allocation. The allocation for the cost of local health integration networks can be found in this year's estimates. I believe we've answered quite on the point on all of those questions that were raised.

Mr. Jackson: I was very clear to indicate that there are only a few months left in this year, and we know about the \$10 million to \$20 million that you've allocated just for the LHIN conversion. I'm talking about the \$100 million that you've left unaccounted for next year.

The media are also expressing concern about your downloading of accountability for health delivery in this province because of your preference for non-elected, appointed persons, in particular as it relates to CCACs. Here's what your own documents that you tabled in this House on Friday say: "That CCACs would select their

own members and directors under the provisions of the Corporations Act"; "The Corporations Information Act would not apply to the CCAC..."; "... the requirement for a community advisory council would be repealed." It goes on: "CCACs would no longer have to provide audit and annual reports..."; "The minister would have the power to order the specific transfer of assets"; and you "would not be entitled to compensation," at the discretion of the minister.

Minister, these are serious questions. How is it that you can move the delivery of community-based care from—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. There must have been a question there.

Mr. Jackson: How can you justify that as community service?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: You sure are confused.

In the year 2000, that member was part of a government that robbed the community of community care access centres, that took away from the community the right to appoint people who were involved in the coordination of delivery of some of those most essential community-based services.

The legislation, Bill 36, that is before this House, if passed—and I recommend it to members—will restore community responsibility for community care access centres. This is fulfilling an important commitment to drive health care to the community level, where people from the community are much better able to help make decisions about which local priorities must be supported.

Accordingly, this is not about debt. The member used the phrase "downloaded accountability."

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Yes. Actually, Leah Casselman did. It's nice to see that you're using a phrase that they use.

No one around here pretends that we're not responsible for health care. We're very, very keen to do our job well. Accordingly, we want people from the local community to exercise important decisions so that at the ministry, at the head office, we can exercise our more strategic objectives better than they have been so far.

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Government Services. On Wednesday, just before the Paul Martin government announced that it would not tax trusts and would cut the tax on stocks that pay dividends, trading in many income trusts and dividend-paying stocks became much heavier than usual. Experts say there's only one possible explanation for this increase in trading, and that is that investors clearly knew about the government plan. Al Rosen, a respected forensic accountant, said, "Clearly, there was a leak."

The Ontario Securities Commission is responsible for investigating corporate malfeasance; in turn, they report

to you. Can you tell us, is the OSC investigating this apparent case of insider trading?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): First, I'd say that I have complete confidence in the Ontario Securities Commission. It's an organization with an impeccable reputation and with a new chair of the OSC in whom I have an awful lot of confidence.

The member will know that they are clearly an arm's-length organization. You would know that, clearly, a minister would not be in any way involved in whether or not they are conducting an investigation. I have complete confidence in them. They properly monitor their markets on an ongoing basis, and I will leave that decision, frankly, in their hands.

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Mr. Prue: Mr. Minister, this is the same OSC that cleared Conrad Black. But the Americans seemed to find out a great deal of information to lay charges.

The people out there in Ontario, the people out there in Canada, have seen huge amounts of money exchange hands just before a government financial announcement, and it looks bad. They are asking themselves the questions—and this is not my question to you—“Was there a leak? Did insiders profit? Did well-connected Liberals' friends benefit in any way?” Canadians need to know what happened. The minister won't say if the Ontario Securities Commission is investigating. You won't say that today.

Can you at least tell the House, and this is my question, did anyone in Ontario's finance ministry at least notice the suspicious surge in income trust trading, and if so, did they pass that information on to you and to the OSC?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: The member, I think, should know, and if he doesn't I'll just make it clear again, that I do not get involved in any direction of the OSC. They are an independent organization.

I would say to all of us that the Ontario Securities Commission is well regarded. They monitor the markets on ongoing basis, and I have complete confidence in them that they will take whatever steps are appropriate. If there are any steps necessary, they will take them. The securities commission is well regarded, well respected in monitoring the markets, operating at arm's length from government interference, and would I hope that the members of the Legislature would not want it any other way. I hope the member is not suggesting that there should be political interference in the Ontario Securities Commission.

TRUCKING INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. You recently announced a new trucking apprenticeship program for the province of Ontario. This being such an important industry for Ontario, and vital to my great riding of Mississauga East, where we have many logistic

companies, we want to ensure that we have highly skilled and well-trained people operating these trucks. Apprenticeships are an excellent way to learn from an experienced person who knows the skills that these apprentices will want to gain. I'm glad the McGuinty government is dedicated to increasing apprenticeships across the province and raising the profile of apprenticeships to show how important they are to the prosperity of our province.

Minister, can you please tell my constituents and the rest of the people of Ontario how this program will work and how it will improve the trucking industry and enhance apprenticeships throughout our great province?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga East for his advocacy on behalf of the trucking industry, of which I know a substantial part is located in his very riding. In fact, just the other week, I was pleased to announce the new tractor-trailer commercial driver apprenticeship, a voluntary apprenticeship program that provides 52 weeks of training—12 weeks of mentored training and 40 weeks of on-the-job training. In what areas? It will be in the areas of trip planning and equipment safety. It will be in the area of safe planning of the trip itself. It will be in the areas of the customs and other regulations that truckers have to face day in and day out.

The fact of the matter is that driving a large tractor-trailer is a profession, and we finally recognized that it is a profession with this great apprenticeship. It will ensure more drivers who are better trained, and that's good for the industry and good for Ontario.

Mr. Fonseca: Minister, as we all know, trucking has become of vital importance to Ontario's economy. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has just outlined to all of us the new government initiative on voluntary apprenticeship programs to teach novice truck drivers not only the rules of the road but also the requirements of shipping goods across the border. With an increase in just-in-time shipping, we need to make sure that truck drivers have those essential skills.

Minister, can you tell us about the importance of keeping our trucking industry going?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think I should refer this to the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I would like to thank the member from Mississauga East, my colleague from Mississauga. I want to also thank Minister Bentley for taking the leadership role in developing the truck apprenticeship programs.

Roughly about \$1.2 trillion worth of goods moves on our highways, and \$700 million worth of goods crosses the borders every year, so this program is really important for the trucking industry, which plays a very important role in our province.

How can it help? Let me just say, (1) it will give new people who want to enter this industry exposure to the industry; and (2) it will help us improve the skills of the people. There is already a shortage of those people in the trucking industry. So I think this is a vital step in the right

direction, and we look forward to working with training, colleges and universities to promote this great initiative.

NURSE PRACTITIONERS

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, we have some very effective nursing stations in the Parry Sound–Muskoka area. In fact, at the present time, there are some five nursing stations operating. They are providing quality primary health care close to home for the small communities they serve.

My question is regarding sustainability. Will you ensure that the nursing stations in the Parry Sound–Muskoka area are funded at a sustainable level to ensure their continued successful operation?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): What I will undertake to do, with some assistance from the honourable member, is take a closer look at their current circumstances and try to assess what it is that leads to the question. I don't have more information at hand, but I'd be very happy to work with the honourable member to try to come to such a conclusion.

Mr. Miller: I appreciate the minister's willingness to work me.

Minister, I raise the question because of concerns with the current funding, particularly with the Whitestone and Rosseau nursing stations. In fact, the municipality of Whitestone has recently passed a resolution in support of sustainable funding.

I'd like to point out that these are very successful. In fact, Whitestone and Rosseau each serve about 3,000 residents year-round, tripling to some 9,000 residents in the busy summer season. Most people have their needs looked after right in the nursing station, which helps lower demands on the rest of the health system.

But they currently have an unsustainable situation. The danger is that we will either lose nurse practitioners—the nurse practitioners will quit—or we'll face reduction in services. I know they are facing some deficits, and I would appreciate the minister looking into this situation which is very important to the residents of Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I think the honourable member presents these as a very viable option in smaller communities. We're proud of the investments that we've been able to make to sustain more of that kind of community-based primary care resource, and accordingly we'll work to take a look at it.

The honourable member did mention funding with respect to nurse practitioners, and I thought it would be helpful to apprise the House of a change that we recently made. Over a period of time, different programs were put in place to assist in funding nurse practitioners, and we have ended up in a situation where provincial programs were supporting nurse practitioners at three different salary levels. I just want to confirm for the House that in the last few weeks we've been able to make progress, and

we've levelled out those salaries in a fashion that makes less competition among roles for nurse practitioners, at an additional cost of about \$2.4 million but addressing an irritant that had been there for the Nurse Practitioners Association of Ontario.

So I will, as I said in my earlier answer, seek to work with the honourable member to get an answer that is satisfactory to him and to the local community.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. The National Child Poverty Report Card for 2005 quotes our Governor General, Michaëlle Jean, who said, and I'd like to quote her because it's an important quote: "While all children are born equal, they don't have all the same opportunities to flourish.... Nothing in today's society is more disgraceful than the marginalization of some young people who are driven to isolation and despair."

Minister, the 164,000 children whose federal baby bonus you continue to claw back are the same children at risk of violence and poverty as they grow up. The Governor General said, "We must not tolerate such disparities." My question to you is, why do you tolerate that disparity?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate once again the opportunity to state on the record the amount of work our government has done to, in fact, help children who are in poverty. Very specifically, from the first budget of this government and on, we have moved that yardstick forward every time.

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As I've said in the House previously, I think the member opposite is genuinely concerned about the plight of children who live in poverty in this province. I also think that because of that, he should be voting with the government on every one of these initiatives. In fact, his history has been exactly the opposite. So while I appreciate that you have an opportunity to ask these questions, when you see that the government is moving in a positive direction, like releasing every new increase for the NCB since we took government—to date, that's a \$37-million investment in families for these children, for the very children that you speak of, but you voted against that measure. In so many ways, like the increasing of all of the agencies that assist children—in particular, children in poverty—you again voted against that measure. So while I appreciate your asking these questions, I insist that you, on behalf of these same people, vote with the government on these items.

Mr. Prue: I will vote with your government when you have the good grace to do what Manitoba has done, what New Brunswick has done, and end the clawback. If those have-not provinces can do it, surely Ontario can do it, and when you ask for my vote then, you'll get my vote then.

Minister, the report goes on to say that provincial governments have “a critical role to play by ending clawbacks.” Their recommendation is clear: Stop provincial clawbacks for social assistance recipients.

Madam Minister, another question—and I want you to talk about the clawback: When are you going to keep your pre-election promise to end the unjust clawback, as the Premier said in the days and weeks leading up to the election?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: Once again I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome this member who asks these questions to join us as we speak to our federal colleagues about closing the gap between what often will go from Ontario to support our colleague provinces. Our position is yes, to help our colleague provinces, but in the area of federal government assistance to social services, unfortunately we have fallen behind. For that very reason, we don't have the same opportunities that New Brunswick or Manitoba—some of the examples you use—have to continue to do more and grow by leaps and bounds. We do struggle with that.

The member opposite is fully aware of the kinds of increases this ministry has seen in just the last two years. The member has to understand how remarkable that is. Despite a deficit that we walked into, which was a surprise to all of us, we have still managed it to help the vulnerable on virtually every front—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): My question is to the Minister of Health. People in Mississauga know all about wait times for health care, and that's why we're so encouraged about the new MRI facility in Mississauga. We in Ontario have gone from being laggards to being leaders in addressing the wait time for key medical procedures. For about a decade and a half, Ontario's wait times got longer and longer, and finally people are seeing how the end of an era of confrontation and a long-term investment in people and facilities are making a real difference.

Ten years ago, the Tory election platform said the fact that cancer patients can be trapped on waiting lists for months at a time is a crime. The real crime was the lack of fortitude and the lack of will to move forward by the previous government.

Minister, our government recently helped to announce the new MRI machine at Trillium Health Centre. Can you tell me how this and similar announcements will reduce wait times for my constituents in Mississauga West?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate so much the chance to answer the question from the hard-working member from Mississauga West. His concern for health care is deeply noted. It relates to the people of Mississauga, not just to the most local of his hospitals at Credit Valley, but also at Trillium Health Centre.

I think it's well known by now that our government's investment of about a quarter of a million additional procedures is resulting in reduced wait times in a variety of areas, and MRI really stood as one of those most necessary opportunities. Our government's increase of 42% is meaning less waits for people. At Trillium, in addition to the installation of a new MRI, which will give them an efficiency boost of about 1,200 additional scans per year for the same operating dollars we had, we've been able to make an investment in more hours at Trillium Health Centre, which has resulted over the last couple years in almost 2,000 additional MRI and CT scans. These things, taken together, mean lower wait times for the people of Mississauga who depend on Trillium Health Centre.

Mr. Delaney: That's the kind of action that my western Mississauga constituents have been waiting for for far too long. It's the kind of progress that my constituents in Mississauga West want to hear about from me when I'm in their living rooms and at their doors and at their kitchen tables.

I'd like to ask you about another aspect of our government's wait time strategy. As a former Web developer, I was intrigued when you announced our government's new wait times Web site. I was impressed when I went on the site and I could see for myself, for the first time, what wait times are really like at hospitals across the province. The type of disorganization and mystery that my constituents were dealing with before, when they were just trying to get access to key medical procedures, was simply not acceptable.

Minister, could you tell me more about how this Web site fits into the broader plan of our government's new wait time strategy?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: At the heart of our initiatives and our desire to renew medicare in this province is a fundamental recommitment to accountability. Romanow said it was the missing sixth principle. You can't claim to have a well-functioning public health care system if people are not given access to information in a fashion that is easy for them to digest, and health care is sometimes presented in a very complex manner.

I know that Ontarians have benefited, because we've had close to half a million hits on this Web site in the short period since the Premier brought it to life, and it will be updated every two months. But at the heart of it is the fundamental principle that we must do a better job of informing people about what's actually going on in their health care system. It is, after all, a system that belongs to the people. Accordingly, making information available to them in a timely way and in an easier way to access will help to make people more informed and will enhance the quality of the public debate as relates to health care in this province.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Energy. An article entitled “Seniors Left in the Cold” was recently published in the Sun, on Novem-

ber 25. It says, "There is a little house in this little town a few clicks down the road from Port Perry where the lights were out for over a month, where the furnace no longer ran and where the old couple" were living in the cold and in the dark.

I was certainly disappointed when I looked into it. Our constituency office has been working with this family. The Pedzikowskis are both in their 80s. He's a former prisoner of war in Germany. She'd been a seamstress for many years. He was a volunteer fireman for 35 years.

Minister, is your energy policy for seniors and people on a fixed income one where we're going to leave them in the cold and in the dark?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I thank the member for the question. I would have appreciated it if the member had given me a call, and I would have personally helped him with this particular situation. However, having not heard it until now, I would still welcome the opportunity to work with you to resolve this.

I can tell you that both the local distribution companies or utilities and the gas companies have policies in place to help people with low income or modest income. They certainly have policies where they do not shut off hydro or gas. They have opportunities, either self-identified or working with utilities, to resolve these types of issues. As I indicated, I would be more than happy to work with the member on this particular issue.

Mr. O'Toole: Thank you very much. I will avail myself of your assistance on this file.

I'll just report to you that "Hydro One spokesman Daffyd Roderick, speaking generically, said it is a 'long and slow process' that leads to the eventuality of a consumer's power being turned off, but he would not talk specifics" without release of privacy information.

I am very interested. What their dilemma came down to was that charges and late charges on a bill were initially \$4,000 outstanding, but after some negotiations, it turned out to be \$1,700.

Minister, I'm pleased that you've agreed to work with me on this file. But the clear message here is that each of us as members have serious concerns during the winter and the cold weather to work with you, Minister. I appreciate the co-operative nature, and I will be calling you on these files as they are brought to my attention.

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Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I say to the member and to all the members in the House that if you do have an issue of this nature, I would welcome the opportunity to work with you, and I encourage you to phone my office immediately so that we can work with the local utilities or gas companies to resolve these types of issues.

I can say that this was a Hydro One issue; it was resolved and it was restored. However, having said that, I should also inform you that Hydro One has a program where they've been working with Canada Mortgage and Housing to look at low-income and modest-income folks, where they have been replacing windows and doors and

doing the ceiling and furnaces for up to \$3,000 to \$4,000 on a qualifying home.

I repeat to all of the members: If you do have an issue, I encourage you, please, to get hold of my office as soon as possible.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—I squeezed this one right under the wire. As you know, I spent a couple of nights in Jane-Finch, as you have spent a night in Moss Park. What I witnessed there, I think you also witnessed: poverty, despair, mice and cockroaches, 40-year-old appliances and leaky roofs.

You make announcement after announcement. There was even one today for Kitchener, which we welcome. But what about the people who live in the pre-existing houses? Parkdale has put you down as a nominee for the slum landlord of the year. I have to ask you, what about the properties for which you are responsible? Will you commit to finding the \$224 million necessary to do the fundamental repairs that the city of Toronto is asking for for the existing housing stock?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Let me first of all say that I welcome the question from the member, because I know much work has been done and much more work needs to be done. Certainly, the condition of the existing public housing stock is an issue for all of us. That is precisely why we have already started the discussions some time ago with the federal Minister of Housing to make sure that as the mortgages get paid down, as the debentures get paid down on the public housing stock that was built 30, 40, 50 years ago, the additional amount of money that isn't required any more for those mortgages will be reinvested in the repair and upgrading of those housing units.

We are working with the federal government on that. I agree with the member that it needs to be done, because everyone in Ontario deserves to live in good, adequate housing. That's something we're aiming toward. We've done an awful lot already, but there's a lot more work to be done.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order, Speaker, let me correct an impression that may have been left during questioning from the honourable member from Leeds-Grenville.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Are you going to correct the record?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Yes. With reference to the discussion which went on related to the distribution of safe crack kits, I confirm that those have been available for six years.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Pursuant to standing order 30(b), it being past four of the clock, I'm now required to call for orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAMILY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE DES QUESTIONS FAMILIALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 23, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 27, Bill 27, An Act to amend the Arbitration Act, 1991, the Child and Family Services Act and the Family Law Act in connection with family arbitration and related matters, and to amend the Children's Law Reform Act in connection with the matters to be considered by the court in dealing with applications for custody and access / *Projet de loi 27, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur l'arbitrage, la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et la Loi sur le droit de la famille en ce qui concerne l'arbitrage familial et des questions connexes et modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance en ce qui concerne les questions que doit prendre en considération le tribunal qui traite des requêtes en vue d'obtenir la garde et le droit de visite.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to complete my comments on second reading of this bill. I regret that there is some real time pressure, and I similarly regret that the government is inclined to want to see this bill passed with haste when, in fact, the bill is very problematic. New Democrats are very clear in that regard.

I know the cheap political shots that, from time to time, the Attorney General has made, along with other government members, with respect to the Arbitration Act, 1991, an arbitration act that was supported by all three political parties in this Legislature and that had its origins, as we know, in a national effort to basically harmonize arbitration legislation from province to province. It's far from the first arbitration act that this province witnessed or experienced.

Indeed, as I had occasion to explain to you last time I spoke to this, we had, like so many other jurisdictions, utilized the 1889 British Arbitration Act as the standard, as the legislative source—not of arbitrations, because understand that you don't need legislation to have an arbitration. In fact, the very language of the Arbitration Act confirms that. You can have arbitrations without any government legislation, and quite frankly, to the extent that this bill is an effort to control or eliminate faith-based arbitrations, I tell you that the bill does nothing to eliminate faith-based arbitrations. There will be faith-based arbitrations whether this bill passes or not; make no mistake about it. The Arbitration Act, of course, is about the enforceability, by the public courts, of an arbitrator's decision.

Perhaps we should revisit the comment that was made about the Arbitration Act of 1991 by author Robert M. Nelson in *Nelson on ADR*. The Arbitration Act, 1991—that's the Howard Hampton bill which is the law now—an act about which all of us should be very proud, those of us who were here in the Legislature, of all three political parties who supported that bill. Nelson says, at page 148:

"The Arbitration Act, 1991 is a marked improvement over the previous act which had been in force in Ontario for almost 100 years. Its enactment, coupled with the International Commercial Arbitration Act of Ontario, means that the province of Ontario has implemented legislation which enables it to take its place as a jurisdiction friendly to domestic and international arbitrations. The act has many important features, and arbitral tribunals are given many important powers. The act codifies many common law principles and in doing so clarifies the role of the court in overseeing the arbitral process."

There's Nelson, an expert in the area of alternative dispute resolution, saying that. What did the courts say about it? Mr. Justice Blair, in the decision of *Ontario Hydro and Denison Mines Ltd.* had this to say, and that's the 1992 decision in the Ontario Court (General Division). Mr. Justice Blair said:

"The Arbitration Act, 1991 came into effect on January 1, 1992. It repealed the former Arbitrations Act, RSO 1980, c. 25, and enacted a new regime for the conduct of arbitrations in Ontario. This new regime is more sophisticated than that of the former act and more consistent with international commercial arbitration practices. It is designed, in my view, to encourage parties to resort to arbitration as a method of resolving their disputes in commercial and other matters, and to require them to hold to that course once they have agreed to do so."

This bill creates a new regime that is, as I've indicated, neither fish nor fowl. The Arbitration Act, 1991—the act in effect now, the act which is amended by this bill—in section 2 very clearly anticipates areas of law which may not be suitable for arbitration: binding arbitration, arbitration that's enforceable by the public courts. Take note of what Nelson says in his book, *Nelson on ADR*, on page 143: "The public interest requires that the ability of the parties to agree on arbitration be limited. Some matters are not suitable for arbitration, e.g., criminal charges, marriage and divorce, public health and environmental rights, constitutional guarantees, etc."

Here's an expert on arbitration, along with other forms of dispute resolution, stating the obvious: that some areas of disputes are not suitable for arbitration. That's what New Democrats say. New Democrats say that the fair, the just, the meaningful response to concerns around faith-based arbitration of family law matters is to simply utilize section 2 of the Arbitration Act, as Quebec did, and exclude family law matters from the Arbitration Act. This government doesn't do that. Rather, this government, I say to you and firmly believe, has made a bad situation worse.

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Those with a libertarian perspective, those who are concerned about the intrusion of the state in matters which should be purely private, should be very concerned about this bill. Those who are concerned about justice when it comes to family law adjudication should be very concerned about this bill.

Last time we spoke about this bill I read to you comments by Owen Fiss on the reality that you don't get justice in a private dispute mechanism; you get justice in a public court applying public law. That court is pre-occupied, however imperfect it might be from time to time—I mean, that's why Nelson talks about the unsuitability of certain areas for arbitration, like constitutional matters, like environmental matters, like marriage and divorce, like criminal charges.

It was fascinating, a fantastic discovery for me, to learn that an author, Derek Roebuck, has written a book on ancient Greek arbitration. He also wrote one on ancient Roman arbitration, for that matter. He's talking about arbitration in Greece before Christ, BC. This is a summary of what ancient Greek arbitration consisted of. I'm quoting from Roebuck and his book *Ancient Greek Arbitration*—Oxford, The Arbitration Press, 2001. This is Greece, over 2,000 years ago:

"If the parties chose to submit their dispute to private arbitration, then throughout the arbitration they had almost unlimited freedom of choice. By their agreement, they controlled the subject matter in dispute, the selection of arbitrators, the limits of their jurisdiction, the rules of procedure, and even whether they should decide the issue according to the law or should determine it according to their sense of fairness, or more likely expediency, of whatever they thought was best for the parties. The Greeks took it for granted that the parties had control over their own private process of dispute resolution. That is one conclusion that appears to be universal throughout the period.

"That has two elements. First, the community did not compel the parties to a private dispute to bring it to its attention, so that the community could concern itself with how the dispute was resolved. Secondly, the community would enforce the agreement to submit to private arbitration and the award of the private arbitrator. In classical Athens, at least, the law forbade a party to a dispute which had been resolved by arbitration from bringing it before a *dikasterion*."

"*Dikasterion*" is the singular of "*dikasteria*." The *dikasteria* were the jury courts of ancient Greece. Interestingly—and this is just a little bit of trivia that I encountered; I mean, it's good information, but here you go—they utilized an initial jurors' list of 6,000 drawn from volunteers over the age of 30. The typical number of jurors in a *dikasterion*, a single jury court, was 500, so 500 jurors would sit. There were no lawyers. Perhaps they, long before Shakespeare, adopted that Shakespearean recommendation. There were no lawyers, no state prosecutors, no judges. Each litigant was allowed two speeches, each timed by water clock. There was no

cross-examination of witnesses, and the jurors voted immediately, without discussion, and any majority of votes was sufficient for conviction or acquittal—no further appeal.

Roebuck's observations about what constituted arbitration in ancient Greece over 2,000 years ago is strikingly bang on with what constituted arbitration in the 18th and 19th centuries. It's strikingly bang on with what constituted arbitration pursuant to the British Arbitration Act of 1889, which served as the model for the Canadian law until 1991 with the Arbitration Act, and indeed is, oh, so bang on with what arbitration consists of today.

Why do people choose arbitration? One is the privacy element. The parties have the opportunity to resolve a dispute outside of public view and scrutiny. Again, arbitration has as its primary origins the dispute resolution between commercial parties, businesspeople—commercial disputes—who have no interest in having a public record or an audience in a public court hearing evidence about things that constitute what they want to keep or maintain as trade secrets: information about profits, information about production costs, information about design, about business plans. So one of the attractions of arbitration, whether it was in ancient Greece over 2,000 years ago or whether it's in Canada or Britain or the United States or any other place in the world in 2005, is the fact that it's private.

The other, often referred to as a key consideration, is the ability of the parties to choose their arbitrator. To choose their arbitrator—well, one, there is agreement. Take the distinction, look at the distinction, between that and a public court, where litigants, other than the occasional case of judge-shopping—which is being discouraged, increasingly—don't get to choose their judge in a public adjudication. Indeed, they don't even get to know their judge. A judge would be disinclined to adjudicate between litigants if he or she had a relationship with either of them, either current or past, or if there was any sort of suggestion of that matter. But in a private arbitration and in arbitration, it's private; it's secret. Nobody has to know about the fact that it's going on. Nobody has to know what the result is. Nobody has to know any of the evidence that's presented, and the parties get to choose their arbitrator. So they agree, clearly; it's by agreement, subject to certain exceptions that can flow under peculiar circumstances, depending upon what gives rise to the arbitration, what sort of contractual relationship gives rise to the arbitration.

One of the interests in being able to pick your own arbitrator is, one, it's somebody that both parties feel comfortable with, feel satisfied with, to the extent that you're more likely to have voluntary compliance, because both parties agree that this is the right woman or man, or women or men, to decide and resolve their dispute. They also get to choose somebody who has expertise in that particular area. Illustrations are manifold, but let's say you're talking about the aerospace industry, and some detailed minutia that laypeople would certainly not understand, and let's say most judges, without a great deal of assistance, wouldn't understand.

The litigants in that type of arbitration—the adversaries, the parties—can choose somebody who has experience and background in that particular industry, where they can, as has so often been stated, apply the customs of the trade.

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The litigants also get to choose the procedure, subject to certain bare-bones requirements in the Arbitration Act like natural justice. That way, they can expedite the matter.

They get to decide how evidence is presented, whether it's presented by live witnesses speaking—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Do we have a quorum?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Can we check to see if there is a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre, you have the floor.

Mr. Kormos: Thank you, Mr. Levac, for getting your folks in here. You're the whip of a caucus that's got, what, 60 or 70 members. Heck, it should be easy to get a dozen of them in here.

We were talking about why people choose arbitration:

(1) Privacy.

(2) The ability to choose the adjudicator, the arbitrator, for any number of good reasons.

(3) The ability to determine the process. It may not be necessary to hear evidence from witnesses giving their evidence vocally; you can do it by affidavit, you can do it by agreed statement, by summaries.

(4) There's no need to make a record, to have a court reporter there transcribing everything that's said.

(5) It's binding. One of the most appealing things about arbitration and reasons why people utilize arbitration is because they can agree that it's to be binding—no further appeals. They want a final resolution of this dispute. They don't want to see it go on and on and on into appellate court after appellate court etc.

There was a time when decreased cost and increased speed was a consideration, but as Julie Macfarlane, in her book *Dispute Resolution: Readings and Case Studies*, points out in the commentary on page 533, "Other stated reasons for preferring arbitration include decreased costs and increased speed, but the process has recently come under criticism for being increasingly slow, expensive, and formal."

Arbitration is an important tool that should be made available to willing parties in a free and democratic society, people who determine to resolve their differences in a private way and according to a process that they agree on. But as has been pointed out by Nelson, as has been pointed out by thinkers and writers like Owen Fiss, it's not always the suitable tool, the suitable mechanism, for all disputes. New Democrats agree. There is

an overwhelming societal interest in how family disputes are resolved, especially as they apply to children, that it should only be the public law applied by public courts.

I say that advocates of arbitration should be concerned about this legislation, because it constitutes a major intrusion on the part of the state in a historic dispute resolution process, one that goes back, as we see from Roebuck's study, literally thousands of years with very little substantive change.

I would also say that those people who are concerned about arbitration adjudication of family matters—the Premier said there would be no religious arbitration. That's what he promised. Dalton McGuinty said, "There will be no more religious arbitration." I tell you that under this legislation, there not only will be religious arbitration, but it will have the seal of approval of the state. It's one thing to tell an arbitrator that he or she can't allow the litigants to choose the law to be applied, although, quite frankly—look, let's take the case of a real-life example of two French citizens, a husband and wife, who are living in Canada and who want to divorce and want to have French law prevail in their divorce because their assets are in France. They want a speedy, effective resolution. This government has told them with this bill that they can't go to an arbitrator and say, "Please apply the law of France in a speedy and efficient manner and resolve the disputes around our marriage breakup." The bill very clearly says "the laws of Ontario or the laws of any other jurisdiction in Canada," and I presume that means other provinces and territories; I'm not sure whether that means the law of Canada as well.

That is an illustration of where this government once again has taken a bad situation and made it worse, has impacted on classic arbitration when in fact the Arbitration Act, 1991, itself contemplates, by virtue of section 2, certain areas of law that should and would not be suitable for arbitration that's enforceable by the public courts.

Will there still be religious arbitration? You bet your boots. We have public judges who are impartial, neutral in every respect, who don't bring ethnic biases and religious biases into the courtroom. Mark my words: There will be rabbis, there may well be pastors of any number of Christian faiths, there could be priests from the Catholic faith or the Anglican church, religious leaders from Sikh communities and imams from Muslim communities who will do what's required to register as arbitrators and who will be conducting arbitrations, who will be purporting to enforce and apply the law of Ontario but will be doing it with the inherent bias of their faith.

I say "bias" in a perfectly neutral way. I am not about to tell anybody what to believe. It's their business. Nor should the state be telling people what to believe. But if this government is pretending—because that's all it can be—that it is responding to the concern around faith-based arbitration by creating this legislation, then it is deluding itself along with a whole lot of folks out there. Not only will there be the inherent bias of faith leaders,

the bias of their faith penetrating the arbitration—you see, Fiss says you go to a public court, with publicly appointed judges, if you want justice. You have those incredibly rigid standards. In a private adjudication, you don't.

One of the reasons for arbitration is so that the parties can pick the arbitrator. If we're talking about two parties perhaps litigating in the context of the aerospace industry, they want someone who has a particular bias; in other words, someone who is familiar with the traditions and customs and standards in the aerospace industry. In family litigation and applying the law of Ontario and the law of the land with respect to the rights, among other things, of children, I say no.

So I cannot support this legislation. I cannot. I tell you that when people out there—whether it's from the arbitration community, whether it's lawyers, advocates for women and children, people concerned around faith-based arbitration—increasingly understand that when Dalton McGuinty said there will be no religious arbitration, he certainly didn't come through with respect to this bill, I suspect that there's going to be even greater concern. It's imperative that this bill go to public hearings. I urge Liberal caucus members to remind their Premier that it's a simple matter of utilizing section 2 and saying that the Arbitration Act will not apply to anything other than, or to anything that involves family law litigation.

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The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion):

In the brief time I have, I'd like to commend both the Attorney General and the Premier for their decision. It was very decisive and clear-cut when the Premier said that there's going to be one law for all Ontarians. I know the reaction in my own riding of Ottawa West—Nepean from Muslim men and women and other faith-based organizations was that they were very pleased with that decision, because people did have legitimate concerns about shariah law.

I'm quite proud to stand and support the legislation that's before the House. I'd encourage members on all sides of the House to support this particular piece of legislation for the simple reason that it's the fair thing to do. Under the legislation, resolutions based on other laws and principles, including religious principles—shariah, Christianity, Judaism etc.—would have no legal effect and would only amount to advice. There was tremendous outpouring of support when the Premier a few weeks ago indicated that that was going to be the position of the government.

Just in the last moment, on a bit of a side issue, while I have the floor, I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate Carleton University's student newspaper, the Charlatan, which turned 60 years old today. It's a newspaper that I actually used to write for when I was a student at Carleton University. It's a great publication that has served the Carleton community and the broader Ottawa community for many years. It has generated

dozens and dozens of wonderful journalists who have gone on to work for major publications and networks across the province. I congratulate Mark Masters, the editor-in-chief, who is presiding over the 60th anniversary of this fine publication.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to stand today and respond to some of the comments made by the member from Niagara Centre. I can tell you that with this bill, Bill 27, An Act to amend the Arbitration Act, 1991, the Child and Family Services Act and the Family Law Act, right today there's a lot of confusion around what's happening down here. There's a tremendous amount of confusion. Maybe there's a great deal of knowledge in the GTA or in some of the areas that the Attorney General represents, but I've had numerous letters, first of all prior to the Premier's announcement on a Sunday afternoon a few months ago, when he mentioned in a press conference that he would bring forward this legislation. There does appear to be secrecy involved around it, or there seems to be a lot of confusion.

One of the things that the government is going to have to do in order to sell this, in order to get support across the province, is to really publicize this one and have a lot of hearings. Hearings will be very important to make sure that everybody who can possibly ask for deputation is allowed to do so.

I can tell you that even since this law was introduced, in the last three weeks I've had 30 pieces of correspondence, and a similar number of e-mails, asking for the position of the government and the position of members of this House in relation to this bill.

I look forward to a lot of public input on this bill. To the government: If they're going to pass this as it is, we're going to have to make sure that the public is aware of exactly what we're passing in this Legislature, in this Bill 27.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): I have had an opportunity to listen to all of the speakers so far, having sat in the chair on the first night, having listened to my colleague from Niagara Centre here today. I want to commend him for the speech he made. It was learned. It quoted excellent sources. It talked about the pitfalls of the legislation. It talked about the conundrum that I believe the government has probably got itself into. It was learned and thoughtful in every way, as his speeches often are. But what really intrigued me was that he stayed on point throughout the entire hour—not that he doesn't always—and argued, I think quite successfully, the flaws of this particular bill.

I was somewhat disturbed, I have to say, to listen to the Minister of Health Promotion, although I went to Carleton University, and that was a good rag of a paper even then. I'm sure it still is.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Well, I didn't write for them.

Mr. Kormos: He did.

Mr. Prue: But he did; OK.

I do have to tell you that I was taken aback somewhat. He did not refer at all to the member from Niagara Centre

or what he had to say, just in terms of a general reaction. I think that perhaps the people out there do not understand what this is, and that there is arbitration going on today and every day and will continue to go on every day, whether that be by rabbis, pastors, priests or imams.

The only thing this bill will do is impose the rigid standards of the court—I think the member from Niagara Centre said that right—but it will not stop arbitration in any of the many forms it takes in this province. I agree with the member that we do desperately need public hearings to clear the air around what this bill will actually do.

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I listened with great interest to the comments from the member from Niagara Centre. I have to take issue with the fact that in many ways he's complicating what at its core is a very simple bill. We're talking about, in the case of family law, one law for everyone in Ontario, and that's Canadian law.

Several weeks ago I had a chance to appear on a television show in my hometown of Kitchener with a prominent member of the Muslim community, who was there to argue in favour of shariah law in terms of that arbitration. What concerned me the most was that in his presentation he seemed to place Canadian law on one side and put it in a sort of juxtaposition against the Muslim law that he followed. What concerned me, and what I pointed out on the TV show, was that in my opinion we are a mosaic. We are a country that has many different faiths and many different traditions. The laws that are passed either here at Queen's Park or in Ottawa, in my view, reflect all these traditions.

So in a sense, Canadian law is reflective of Muslim law; it is reflective of Christian law or Christian traditions; Sikh law or Sikh traditions. It serves as a neutral benchmark. What this bill says is that in cases of family law, we have to use this neutral benchmark. That has to be paramount. It doesn't prevent individuals of a particular faith or tradition from seeking help, seeking advice or seeking guidance through religious figures, but at the end of the day it's Canadian law which is going to be paramount. I think it's wrong to try to juxtapose these different traditions with Canadian law. Canadian law, in my opinion, assumes or subsumes all of these.

At the same time, I agree with those speakers who have talked about education. If we go forward with this bill, I was very pleased to see that we will have a program of education and outreach to ensure that everyone is aware of what their different rights and responsibilities will be, so that if they do enter into arbitration, they'll know how the law stands.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Mr. Kormos: Look, the government is creating two very distinct judicial systems for people who have family law disputes. It's very much like the two-tiered health system that they advocate. One is the public one, which we know is underfunded. People are lined up in the hallways of musty, dank, damp, cold-in-the-winter, hot-

in-the-summer courtrooms with huge backlogs. That's where this government is prepared to assign the vast majority of Ontarians: to use the public courts to adjudicate public law.

Make no mistake about it: The proposal you have here is not going to be cheap. The party is going to have to pay for the arbitrator, pay for the setting and pay for the court reporter. Because you've got appeals—there's no binding arbitration—there are going to have to be transcripts made—thousands of dollars. The litigants are going to have to pay for all of those things that a public system is supposed to provide people in disputes, and clearly, all the more so, in disputes around family matters. So this is not going to be cheap.

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What's the appeal court? The first level of the appeal is to the Superior Court of Justice, those very courts with the huge backlogs. Since there is no binding arbitration, an unhappy litigant with the means is going to appeal it. It takes two and three years for matters to be heard in our Superior Courts of Justice.

Motions courts do the day-to-day stuff. You've got some jurisdictions that don't have motions court judges for weeks at a time. There are no motions courts for the interim, interim, interim, interim orders.

This is not a solution to anything. This is problematic and, quite frankly, can be dealt with so easily by utilization of section 2 of the Arbitration Act.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): It's certainly my pleasure to rise to support Bill 27. But before I go on and talk about the specifics of the proposed bill, what I do want to talk about is how we got to where we are today and read some of the letters that I received at my office so that the people who have the opportunity to view this tonight have a sense of where we were a few scant months ago.

This is a newspaper article that was published in Southampton. It's about a doctor who lives in Southampton. She lost her son through shariah law and she chose to move to Ontario.

"After fleeing from a violent husband in Iran, a former doctor now living in Saugeen Shores was forced by Muslim law called shariah to leave her son behind. He begged her to save him; now she is begging Canadians not to allow shariah law into the Ontario Arbitration Act.

"Debate is ongoing if shariah should be included in Ontario's Arbitration Act. Ontario is looking for ways to ease the burden of a backlogged court system. Its Arbitration Act allows for faith-based arbitration, a system where faiths can use the guiding principles of their religions to settle family disputes such as divorce, child custody, spousal assistance and inheritance outside the court system.

"When I came to Canada, I was happy to be away from shariah," Dr. X said.... "Ninety per cent of Iranians don't believe in it, but it is used to control women."

"In the event of divorce Muslim women must give full custody of children to the father as prescribed in shariah,

a code of living Muslims adopt as a part of their faith.... However, the way shariah law is applied to women can vary widely, such as acceptance of wife beating to surgical removal of the genitalia.... In court, a woman's word is worth only half as much as that of a man's.

"As stated in article 32 of the Arbitration Act, 1991, in deciding a dispute an arbitral tribunal shall apply the rules of law designated by the parties. For example in an inheritance dispute, under shariah law sons would receive larger inheritances than daughters.

"To some Muslims shariah law represents a culturally appropriate way to settle family disputes. But to others, it represents a set of rules that discriminate against women. In an open letter to Premier Dalton McGuinty, the Canadian Council of Muslim Women wrote that shariah is a vast and complex system ... and should not be applied in Canada.

"According to Alia Hogben, executive director of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, it is up to the Attorney General on behalf of the McGuinty government to make a decision as to whether the use of religious laws in family matters will be allowed under the Arbitration Act.

"We have not heard anything official from the government," she wrote in an e-mail, "but (we) have heard rumours that they will respond" by the end of summer.

"Dr. X's son is being raised by her ex-husband's family. When she visited Iran recently the family barred her from seeing her son. Her ex-husband told the boy his mother didn't want him, but Dr. X was determined to find her son and tell him that she didn't abandon him, it was the law that forced her to leave him behind.

"For days, she searched for information about his whereabouts and finally discovered" where he was going to school. It had been five years since she had seen her son. Dr. X now lives in Saugeen Shores. She took the time not only to talk to the papers but also to bring her concerns forward.

Numerous letters were received in my riding, so I wanted to set the context of where we came from and how we got here today in the presentation of Bill 27. Let's not be confused: This bill, if passed, will ensure that there is one law for all Ontarians, and that is Canadian law.

One of the concerns that I heard repeatedly throughout the discussion was with regard to the arbitration and the arbitrators. Through Bill 27, the government will regulate family law arbitrators for the very first time. If this legislation is passed, family law arbitrators would be required by regulation to be members of a recognized professional dispute resolution organization and to undergo training, including training in screening parties separately for power imbalances and domestic violence. They must inquire into matters such as keeping proper records and submit reports that are to be tracked by the Ministry of the Attorney General. This is long overdue. In the arbitration system that was proposed and accepted, there are not checks and balances in place to ensure that one law is established and upheld in the dispute system.

Another letter was sent to the Honourable Dalton McGuinty by the Canadian Federation of University Women, from the Southport organization. This was after the Premier had made the announcement.

"Dear Mr. McGuinty,

"The members of the Canadian Federation of University Women ... Southport would like to thank and congratulate you for the strong statement you made yesterday in support of equal legal rights for all women"—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Would the member please take her seat?

Now you may resume.

Mrs. Mitchell: "We strongly support your decision to ban all faith-based arbitration of family law matters.

"At the 2005 CFUW National AGM," which was in Oakville from August 12 to 19, "... members from across Canada voted to adopt the following policy: to exclude family law disputes from arbitration legislation so that the rights of an individual under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms are respected; and to ensure that all residents of Canada are made cognizant of their rights and responsibilities under family law legislation and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

"Multiculturalism and religious tolerance" are so important to people in Ontario, "but, as you have affirmed, this does not translate into the establishment of separate legal systems for individuals of different faiths.

"We can and must make our provincial court systems accessible and fair to our multicultural communities by ensuring adequate government funding for the provision of:

"—translators ...

"—education of judges" who can "appreciate the social, cultural and religious" backgrounds ...

"—education of members of different ethnic communities in their own language—especially those new to Canada and Ontario ...

"—access to legal aid....

"You and your government have taken an important first step. Thank you, and especially thanks to the members of the women's caucus for listening, and for hearing the voices of all who value equality before the law in Ontario."

The Southport organization has 72 members in Saugeen Shores, located in the beautiful riding of Huron-Bruce. They are part of the Ontario council, which has 6,000 members. That's part of the university women's organization.

1700

Bill 27 will put into place the tools that are needed to ensure that we have one law practice for families. Under the current system, participants of family arbitration can waive their right to the decision for the arbitrator's decision in court. This is a very important point, as this new bill will give that the right of appeal cannot be waived, so that anyone who is not satisfied with the result can go before an Ontario court for review. That is a very

important point that we must bring forward and add emphasis to.

Another very important fact, too, is that the minister, Sandra Pupatello, who has done so much work on women's issues and understands the commitment, is also going to develop new community outreach and education programs so that all Ontarians will better understand their rights under Canadian and Ontario family law and family law arbitration. These are the tools that must be in place for Ontario law and Canadian law to be upheld, to ensure that all rights of all people are upheld for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): This is an interesting bill. I think I'm supportive of this bill, in general. I was a little disappointed in the way it came to fruition, in that the debate on this shariah law had been going on in Ontario for some period of time, some months, and, lo and behold, I believe it was on a Sunday afternoon, the Premier felt it necessary to make an announcement. All of a sudden there was a huge rush to get this out, such a rush that the announcement had to take place on Sunday afternoon—not in this House, not in this place, but somewhere else. That I found very strange. I think the fact that the debate had been going on for so long and that the final decision was rushed calls into question perhaps some of the motives behind it.

Also, that decision was brought out without any consultation whatsoever with the three lobbies who were impacted by it. There was no consultation with the Muslim community, there was no consultation with the Jewish community and there was no consultation that I'm aware of with any of the Christian communities. That was too bad, too, since this decision was rushed so much, that the various communities weren't consulted and some of their points of view taken into consideration when this bill was drafted. I think that might have made a better piece of legislation, as the member from Welland-Thorold talked about earlier. There are perhaps certain flaws in this legislation and we may have had a better piece of legislation had the consultation started earlier and perhaps the decision been taken in a more formal manner.

Mr. Prue: I often get invited to events in the Muslim community. I get invited to Shia events, to Sunni events or Ahmadi events, or occasionally even to others, because there are many branches of Islam. When I go there, very often I tell them that in Canada, in the West and in North America, people do not understand Islam, and with the greatest of deference and respect to my colleague across the floor, I don't think she understands it either. Islam is not a monolithic faith any more than Christianity is a monolithic faith. Just as in Christianity we have Catholics and we have a hundred branches of Protestantism and you might have the Unitarian Church and the United Church, and they all espouse slightly different things, you will find in Islam that there are even more sects and even more people who are different.

I will tell you that just as all of those sects differ from each other in how they view the faith and how the Koran

is read and how they trust the words purported to be from Muhammad, just as that is all very different, so is the shariah law from the countries from which many of them came.

The shariah law is not a monolithic law; it is not set down in the Koran; it was not set down by Muhammad; it is not set down by any of the major institutions in the various countries. It is, and remains, a set of cultural principles that are from each and every one of the countries and/or the subsets of the countries. When people are talking about shariah law, you need to talk about it not as one institution. It is simply, quite frankly, not one institution; it is a codified set of laws that is hundreds and perhaps thousands of different laws from various parts of the world. I'll speak more to that when it's my turn.

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I'm pleased to rise and have a couple of minutes to speak to this. I want to thank the member from Huron-Bruce, because she laid out a number of very salient points and examples of the type of communication that we've had with a number of groups over the last year. I have to say that I want to also thank the Premier, because he certainly came down very clearly on the side of the common values that we have in Ontario, and that is based on Ontario law.

Having said that, I also want to say that I know Alia Hogben and others have for a long time been making us, and everyone else, strongly aware of the impact religious arbitration has when it comes to discussions in family law.

I have to say that this law is certainly the right direction, and it is very clear that this is about our values of equality. Family arbitration tends to impact particularly when we put the religious aspect into it. There's much evidence that it does impact women in a negative way, and they are the ones who end up feeling the brunt of the, if you want, imbalance that tends to be in family arbitration if and when, many times, religious arbitration is used and has the effect of law.

So I say that I am pleased, and I want to thank the Attorney General for bringing down this legislation and doing it in a way that is going to protect the values that are common to us as Ontarians and as Canadians.

Mr. Dunlop: I am pleased as well to rise to make a few comments on the member from Huron-Bruce and her speech on Bill 27. I heard her bring up the fact that she had met with the Canadian Federation of University Women, who were asking her to support this piece of legislation, and I think they have looked into this fairly clearly. I've had the same request from the chapter in my riding. I met with them last Friday. That was one of the topics on their agenda as they introduced themselves to the new executive and brought a few other issues forward that they want to see the provincial Parliament follow in next the few months.

However, as I said earlier, and I can pass this on once again to the member, there are also other members in your community who may or may not support the legislation who I feel at this time are finding it very con-

fusing. They keep thinking of the shariah law and the comments that were made throughout the winter months last year leading up to the Premier's announcement on that Sunday afternoon. That's the challenge we all, as parliamentarians, have ahead of us today as we debate this piece of legislation and as we take it to committee: We have to make sure that there is not a misunderstanding around it, because I can tell you right now, today there's confusion around it. They think we're passing shariah law. A lot of people feel that way because of the name of the bill and because there was some confusion around the Premier's announcement. I'll tell the members of this House that it's very important as we move forward. Whether the bill is amended or is not amended, we have to make sure that there's not confusion around it. In rural Ontario there is definitely confusion around this bill, as we speak.

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The Deputy Speaker: Member from Huron—Bruce, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Mitchell: I just want to thank the speakers from Beaches—East York, Halton and Simcoe North and the member from Sarnia—Lambton, the chair of the women's caucus, as well. I want to thank the Attorney General for all the work he has done. I know this has been a very difficult journey.

The member from Simcoe made reference to some confusion out in the rural communities. I don't know that we would concur on what the confusion is, but I would concur that there is some confusion. I believe that it is a bill that has had some difficulties, and that the more we can get out and explain so that people understand in a manner they find acceptable—but I will say that the support for Bill 27 in my riding is overwhelming.

We can debate the finer points of the law, and it is our job to do that, but at the end of the day we need and must have one law that covers all law within this province. I know that many things have been thrown into the mix, but at the end of the day that is the consistent message we have heard from our constituents in the riding and clearly that is what I have heard. Bill 27 reflects that. It puts regulation in place to ensure that arbitration remains solid. It is an option—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby—Ajax): It's a privilege to speak to Bill 27. I have a couple of comments at the outset, if I may, about the realities here. The member for Sarnia—Lambton just said that there's evidence about family law arbitrations and bad results and so on. The Attorney General said this in this place the other day: "We have no evidence that family law arbitrations are rendering injustice; no evidence at all. There's nothing in the Boyd report and no one has come forward and said, 'Here are the injustices being visited upon people as a result of family law arbitration.'"

That's at page 1095. I ask the member from Sarnia—Lambton, what are you talking about? If you try to see where this bill is going, what this bill is trying to remedy, you see confusion. It's like Alice in Wonderland. If you

don't know where you're going, it's easy to get lost along the way. They're lost.

They're not sure where they want to go. They like Marion Boyd's report. The former Attorney General of Ontario looked closely at this matter at their request. They said nice things about the report and then there was silence. Then, all of a sudden on the Sunday afternoon, the Premier came out and said, "One law for all," as if that's an answer to the issue. Of course it's not, because we have one law in Canada; we have the Constitution. We're a constitutional democracy in Canada, which includes the Charter of Rights, which includes freedom of religion, which includes the freedom to assemble, and which means that people of faith have certain constitutional charter rights in this country. So to say that one law for all is the answer to everything is actually to say very little. It doesn't answer the question.

The question is, what should the law be? Should faith-based arbitrations be allowed in Ontario? I look now in this bill and I can't tell. Different people, reasonable people, might have different views on the subject. What I see is, regrettably, a huge regulatory power contained in section 58 of Bill 27 about "prescribing standard provisions and requiring that every family arbitration agreement contain those provisions" and so on. This is the sort of dangerous bill that regrettably comes too often before the Legislative Assembly, where the substance of the bill can be determined in regulation, behind closed doors, by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, by the cabinet, and not here in this place.

I can't tell what they're trying to accomplish here, and I suggest that if I can't tell, lots of people can't tell. As the member for Simcoe North just said in this place: the confusion that's out there about what they are trying to do. If they would be clear about it, if they would say, "We are going to outlaw faith-based arbitrations in family law matters," or "We're not," then, fine; stand up before the people of Ontario, and some will like it and some won't. Fine; let the people determine. But to say, "One law for all, and everything is going to be subject to the courts"—it always was subject to the courts. If you had an arbitration decision in Ontario that was contrary to fundamental justice, you had access to the courts like everybody else in Ontario. As I said, this bill is much ado about nothing right now. We can't tell, the people can't tell, what the government is trying to do, and there is a choice to be made.

The practical issues that the member for Niagara Centre talked about: I want to speak to that for a moment, based on my own time in court as a litigator over 25 years or so in this province, with clients in the practice of law and as Attorney General for a time here. The reason that arbitrations and mediations in the non-criminal areas of law became so common in Ontario is because of the failure of our court system and the administration of justice to provide timely, cost-effective resolutions of private disputes.

This is a failure of governments over the years. We saw it most dramatically in civil litigation, where delays

started to accrue in the 1980s and the 1990s, to the point where corporations and individuals with disputes between themselves who wanted to see them resolved walked with their feet. They walked with their feet to mediators and arbitrators and said, "Please resolve these disputes for us. We'll go into our own pocket. We'll pay you for it." Despite the fact that they'd already paid all their taxes to support the court system in the province of Ontario, they paid, out of their own pockets, thousands of dollars to get access to justice on a timely and cost-effective basis. To have an average civil litigation case in Ontario take years, which it does, and take tens of thousands of dollars to resolve, is a failure of government.

Similarly, in family law matters, people started going to private mediators and private arbitrators for some of the reasons expressed by the member for Niagara Centre about being able to choose the person who would resolve a dispute or counsel on a dispute or mediate or arbitrate the dispute, but also because of timeliness. So often matrimonial matters are not simply matters between two adults but rather matters that involve children, and time is vital to the well-being, to the best interests of the children, which is the test that we all agree applies when determining these types of family law matters. So time is important, and timing is important, which is why mediation and arbitration are desirable features of this system in Ontario.

Again, you can actually trust people to make decisions like this. They can figure out for themselves that the court system is too slow, that it's too expensive. All of us as MPPs—I know I've had the experience over 10 years. I wonder if there's a member in this place who has not had people come to them in their constituency offices and say, "My family law dispute, my matrimonial dispute, has dragged on two or three years. I've paid lawyers \$10,000 or \$20,000. I've put a mortgage on the house. I haven't seen my kids in" a period of time. There's this acrimony that's persisting over a long period of time even after the adult relationship is clearly over. The court system prolongs the antipathy between people because of the length of time it takes. What's the alternative? The alternative for lots of these folks has been to go to private mediation and private arbitration.

1720

I say to the government that in Bill 27, and we anticipate that there'll be public hearings, a decision has to be made—are you for it or against it?—that you should be for it, and then you have to get at this issue of law. "One law for all," says the Premier. Well, I guess that means the Charter of Rights applies, because that's part of the Constitution of our country.

We have faith communities in this country, and they have the right to practise their faiths in this country. And if they choose to have their faith rules apply to an arbitration, then the government should say, "We're not going to accept that," or "We are going to accept that." I can't tell from this bill. The standards are going to be in the regulations. Who knows? Make a choice. You're the government; it's up to you to say, "We are going to allow

faith-based groups to arbitrate using their rules," or "We're not." It's all subject to law at the end of the day, in any event, for fundamental denial of justice or due process in the course of the mediation or the arbitration.

So I think the government should come clean about that and decide, deal with Marion Boyd's report, and deal with the issues that have been raised by faith-based communities, including the Canadian Jewish Congress and some of the Muslim groups as well.

It's also an issue of basic freedoms. I know this government, the nanny government, thinks that it knows best for people. It knows best about what kinds of dogs people should have; it knows best about whether people should drink soda pop in schools or they shouldn't drink soda pop—

Mr. Chudleigh: What about fresh sushi?

Mr. Flaherty: Yes, it knows about sushi. The member for Halton Hills reminds me of something about sushi.

For goodness' sake, I've been here 10 years and I would hope—this may be the last time I speak in this Legislature—you'd focus on the big things, on the big picture. Remember people's freedom. Remember that this is a free society. Remember that, and don't start telling people what kind of soda pop to drink, and also don't say to people, "Your faith does not have rules that we will respect."

You say you believe in diversity. If you believe in diversity, then act like you believe in diversity. Don't just talk about it. Don't just show up at the community events and get introduced. When you deal with substantive issues in the province of Ontario like this issue, actually think about it. Think about the person's right to practise their religion in our country of Canada, which makes Canada different from most countries in the world.

It isn't freedom from religion; it is freedom to practise one's faith in this country, whether one has faith or not. It's also freedom not to practise one's faith. I know the member for Sarnia-Lambton doesn't understand this; I can tell. But you have to realize that there's a choice to be made, a balance to be reached, as the Supreme Court of Canada likes to say, between the competing rights in our Charter of Rights. You as a government have to make the choice and be clear about it so you don't mislead the faith groups in Ontario. They're very upset; you have upset them very much. I can understand why they'd be upset, because they weren't consulted about something that is fundamental to their lives together and their lives in our diverse multicultural society.

You who say you care about diversity, why didn't you consult? Why didn't you go to the people whose lives are directly affected by this? Why didn't you ask them for their input and ask them for their thoughts? And why do you now come before this place and bring forward a bill where all of the substance is going to be tucked away in regulations that we don't get to review publicly and the public doesn't get to review in this Legislative Assembly? These are all fundamental concerns.

Religious communities in this province also have rights. They would like the opportunity to speak. They

have certainly told me that. They want to be heard on this, and many consider the way this has been handled "as a slap in the face to faith communities in the province of Ontario." Why did you do this to them? Because you don't know what you're trying to accomplish, and the Premier had a knee-jerk reaction and decided that he would just do this, thinking that he had a solution, that one law fits all, and that was the answer to the question.

Well, if one law fits all, let's talk about the equity-in-education tax credit. If one law fits all, why does the government of Ontario, with our taxes pooled, support faith-based education for only one faith group? How do you justify that?

I see that the member for Sarnia-Lambton is going, "Oh, my goodness, that's right." Yes, it is right. You think about it for a moment and you say, "One law fits all. OK. That means that Mr. McGuinty must mean he's not going to prefer one religious group over another." In my view, in a diverse society—you know my view—we ought to support lots of faith-based groups. It's their tax money, after all. If they choose to educate people in this way or that way, in this faith-based way or another way, or Montessori schools, whatever, OK, let them do it. That's why we brought in the equity-in-education tax credit. That's why people were getting some of their own tax dollars back. That's why the United Nations said that Ontario was wrong not to have equal support for various types of denominational education in Ontario.

If you believe in diversity, my Liberal friends, act like it. Don't just talk about it, don't show up just for the ribbon cuttings at the community centres; actually act on it, bearing in mind the Charter of Rights, bearing in mind the balance that has to be struck between religious rights and other rights that are in the charter.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): What about Newfoundland?

Mr. Flaherty: What about Newfoundland?

The other way, of course—

Interjections.

Mr. Flaherty: The Minister of Health Promotion I'm sure is going to reflect on these issues and consider them further and participate, I hope, or have his government participate, in the public consultations. This is a serious issue, if you think about the most important things to people in their lives and to the constituents who come to our offices. Sure, there are concerns about car insurance from time to time, and other issues, but there are very few issues that touch people more closely than their families and their faith. This bill—or at least the regulations somehow—is going to address fundamental family issues involving spouses and children in the province of Ontario and also their faith concerns.

I urge the members opposite, when some substance is being proposed for this bill, that the substance be disclosed and that it be disclosed before the bill is pushed through by the Liberal majority here; that it be disclosed to committees, so that committees will be able to publicly have input about what exactly the idea is here, what it is that the government is actually proposing for family law, for faith-based communities in the province of Ontario. If

it is simply what it was before, that is, that you can have faith-based arbitrations but they are always subject, ultimately, to appeal to the courts for violations, if that's what it is—and I see the member for Sarnia-Lambton shaking her head. If it isn't that, say so and say it up front. Be honest with the people of Ontario so that when they come to committee hearings, wherever they live, and have broad-based committee hearings, they can have fair notice about what it is you're actually trying to do.

This is important, because you're going to get asked about other issues of fairness when you advance the simplistic notion of one law for all, and forget that we have a guaranteed right of religion and religious faith participation and belief and action in our great country called Canada. So I encourage you to be clear in what it is you're trying to do, and more importantly, bring the substance forward, bring the regulations forward in draft, so that the people of Ontario and the members of this Legislative Assembly will have a chance to review it before the matter becomes law and you bring in the regulations, as I say, behind closed doors.

I have a few minutes left and I'll just say a couple of things, because this is likely the last time I'll speak in this place. It has been an honour to serve my constituents here from Whitby, and for a time from Oshawa and then for a time from Ajax, but always from Whitby, which is our home. I am pleased that the Minister of Health Promotion is here, because I learned on the weekend that an infrastructure project that is near and dear to my heart has actually been transferred to his ministry. It used to be at SCTP or something, some acronym—the Ministry of Tourism, I think—and it's over at the minister's health promotion ministry now. It's called the Abilities Centre Durham and I'm going to take the liberty to speak about it just for a moment, if I may. The concept is a centre for persons with disabilities that will emphasize their abilities, that will serve Whitby and Durham regions, Northumberland county and Victoria county, and probably as far east as the county of Frontenac and so on. It has had funding commitments made by the government of the province of Ontario and the government of Canada, and also by local municipal governments and, I'm pleased to say, substantially supported by the town of Whitby, which has donated the land at Iroquois Park near Lake Ontario. It's a fabulous location, right on Lake Ontario, right on Whitby harbour, which is a beautiful, natural harbour on the north shore of Lake Ontario where persons with disabilities, particularly young people, will have the opportunity to sail, canoe, kayak, swim and do all those great things. There's already a beautiful pool at Iroquois Park so it will not be necessary to build one, which is a substantial expense, as people involved in these projects constantly remind me. The town of Whitby has offered to make the pool accessible to all, which will be a wonderful step forward.

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The other thing that's wonderful, of course, is that Iroquois Park is the largest municipally operated recreation centre in Canada; it has lots of persons without disabilities using it. So when we talk together, I think we all

sincerely believe in being inclusive with respect to persons with disabilities. This is a great location because persons with different kinds of abilities, if I might put it that way, will be with each other in the common areas involving food, walking through the place, the sports museum that we have there and that kind of thing.

I'm pleased that the minister is here. Just as a final farewell—I can raise this because it is something that is proposed to go ahead—there's more work to be done and more money to be raised, but it's a wonderful idea, and I hope the minister will give it his particular attention as we go forward. There would be nothing more significant to me, leaving the Legislature, than to look forward to some day seeing that project completed here.

It has been a pleasure to serve here for more than 10 years. I'm looking forward to being troublesome somewhere else for the next five or 10 years. We'll see. I'm not sure if I will have to change my wardrobe. I see that the member from Ottawa has a pink shirt on today. I'm not sure if I should get more stylish as we move forward to the Ottawa scene.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Not necessary.

Mr. Flaherty: Not necessary, I hear? That's great.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): It depends on where you move within the caucus.

Mr. Flaherty: It depends where I move in the caucus. I thank you. It's been a pleasure.

Applause.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Prue: I think a minute 50 is all I really need, anyway.

It's a real pleasure to stand up here and comment on the very last statement that the honourable member has made or will be making in this House. As always, he says what he needs to say in a very forceful manner. I don't know that there's anyone else in this House who has quite the same conviction or quite the same world view that he does. What he said here today was vintage Jim Flaherty. We are going to miss him.

Having said that, he did say one thing that I think is going to cause a great deal of difficulty to this government if you proceed forward with this bill, because you have not put the same kind of thought process—to say there should be one law for all when it comes to family law—nor do I believe you intend to, toward the very thorny issue of religious education.

In the last week or 10 days, as he so correctly pointed out, we had busloads and busloads of kids and people come from across the province to say that the law in Ontario was unfair, that it was not being uniformly applied across this province to people of faiths other than Catholic. I have to tell you that if what you are saying here today is where you truly believe we should go as a society, then you also have to and, I expect at some stage, will be making that next quantum leap to question the whole separate school issue. I don't know whether you're going to, but this is the kind of debate in the statements you have made which inevitably and invariably will lead to that conclusion.

Ms. Di Cocco: It's a pleasure to again respond to the member for Whitby-Ajax. I have to say that I certainly want to wish him well in his journey to a bigger place than the Ontario Legislature.

I guess the member for Whitby-Ajax is saying that he supports religious arbitration in family law. I have to say that all the people who live in this province have the right to practise their religion and seek advice from whatever religious leaders they choose. No one is saying otherwise, even though the member from Whitby-Ajax is suggesting that somehow this legislation is diminishing their rights to practise their religion. No one is saying that.

We did speak to many women's groups. I think the member from Whitby-Ajax would remember that in the last election, their government put immigration under the heading of crime. When you talk about diversity, what I have to say is that religious faith participation is alive and well. There is freedom of religion in this province, and in no way does this legislation change that.

I'm disappointed with the extreme disregard for what the impact of religious arbitration in family law may have with extreme—such as shariah law. We heard from groups for LEAF, the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, the YWCA and the University Women's Club and they all agree.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure on this auspicious occasion to recognize the member from Whitby-Ajax. We've just witnessed a definitive demonstration of his passion as well as his professionalism in addressing this issue, which I believe he summed up when he said that the whole issue of diversity is such a contradiction to what this legislation is actually doing. It's walking away from the difficult decision of the whole issue of diversity and the right to integrate people into the society while retaining their own values and perceptions of the world we all share.

I'm convinced that he's a serious loss for this opposition party, certainly. During his time in government, I had the privilege of working with Mr. Flaherty. I have a great deal of respect for the work he's done and have great hope for the work he'll do in the future.

But I think it's doing what you say and acting out in real terms of—the whole issue of diversity is the point he made and where his passion became ignited. That's where he is at his best and that's why we will miss him, because of his commitment to doing what he says.

This is what is such a contradiction in not just this legislation, but it's kind of edging into a lot of the issues, skating around, off-loading a lot of the responsibility or accountability mechanisms, as we've seen in health care, as we're seeing now in the Bill 27 discussion on mediation-arbitration.

If you look at the explanatory notes in the bill itself, you'll see that it's almost a contradiction. It says, "A number of additional rules are provided for family arbitrations." What they're saying is that there's one rule, but under the Child and Family Services Act, it's "amended to add mediators and arbitrators to the list of persons who perform professional or official duties with respect to children and are required to report that a child may be in

need of protection.” Then they’re going back and saying that the dispute mechanism is going to be resolved by the one-size-fits-all issue, that the Liberal government is refusing to recognize the differences in Ontario society.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): I’m quite pleased to respond to this. This is an issue on which in my community we received perhaps more calls than on any other issue. The calls were unanimously in favour of taking the direction that our government has taken, which is to say that if arbitrations are to be enforced by the courts, then they must follow the law of Ontario.

I’d like to talk about the reaction we had at my constituency office, because that was interesting. We heard from a variety of people from a variety of religions, because I do live in a diverse community. We heard from people who were young; we heard from people who were old. We heard from people who were professionals; we heard from people who weren’t professionals. We heard from men; we heard from women. In particular, we heard from the Muslim community. With total unanimity, they all said, “We do not want the application of shariah law to be enforceable by Ontario courts.” If in fact an arbitration on the subject of family law is to be enforceable in Ontario courts, then it should be based on the family law of the province of Ontario; in other words, one law for all Ontarians when it comes before the courts of Ontario. Now, clearly, if people are not having a dispute, if people are just taking advice from whomever, people are perfectly free to choose who they’re going to take advice from and can work out a mutually acceptable agreement based on the advice of whomever they want to speak with. But when it comes to court, there is one law.

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The Deputy Speaker: Member for Whitby–Ajax, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Mr. Flaherty: I thank the member for Guelph–Wellington. First of all, this is a process bill, not a substantive bill, and if you look for the principle in the bill, you won’t find it. I challenge the member to find it in the bill. We’re all subject to the law in Canada, we’re all subject to the Constitution of Canada, we’re all subject to the Charter of Rights, and this bill doesn’t change that. We all were before the bill; we all will be after the bill. So it’s specious—fatuous, actually—to say that this is some kind of change. It’s not a change at all. That’s the way it is in a constitutional democracy, as we have now.

I thank the member for Durham. We’ve served together for a long time and worked hard on issues for Durham region. I can say that we didn’t do too badly in our time, I think, when I look at something like the Durham Regional Cancer Centre, that is now up in the air and is starting to be fixed inside and getting equipment in it. It’s something we can be proud of, and the member for Durham had a lot to do with that.

The member for Sarnia–Lambton, to me, with the greatest respect, clearly does not understand the bill and thinks there’s something in there that isn’t there.

I thank the member for Beaches–East York for his comments with respect to the question of fairness of education funding in the province of Ontario. At some

point, if we’re going address that issue as an issue of fairness, there will have to be some steps taken to make that system equal in its treatment of people of various faiths in the province of Ontario.

The Progressive Conservative Party supports this bill in principle, as our critic, Bob Runciman, has said. The devil is in the details of the bill, where the substance will be. As I said in my remarks, I am hopeful that the government of Ontario will choose to disclose the proposed regulations before the matter goes to committee so that the people of Ontario will have an open, transparent and full opportunity to assess exactly what it is the government is trying to do and in what direction they’re intending to go.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: There’s been some good quality debate here in the last few minutes.

I’d like to talk first of all about the comments that I have heard from some members opposite. As I said in a two-minute question and comment within the last half hour, in our society and in North America, it is my firm belief that people do not understand Islam. They do not understand the tenets of the faith; they do not understand the people who practise the faith. In many cases—I don’t know whether it’s because of television; I don’t know if it’s because of the news—they are mistrustful of people who have a deep and abiding and worldwide faith, to a rationale that I fail to understand.

There was some talk about the shariah. The shariah is a codified set of laws. The shariah is in a hundred or a thousand different forms, depending on the countries from whence it originated, the people who wrote it and the societies over which it is the law or code of conduct. All shariah means is, “The good way forward.” My Arabic is not good, but that’s what shariah is. It is to tell people how to live a good life within the four corners and the tenets of Islam. It is culturally very different in Indonesia, as it is in India, as it is in the Arabian Peninsula, as it is in Africa, as it is wherever Islam has taken root and taken hold. Shariah is very different, I would beg to say, in Canada than it is anywhere else because shariah is a type of codified law that changes with the country to which it goes, and that is what is not being understood here. I think when people talk about some monolithic set of laws that degrades women and treats children badly, they do a disservice to that faith and all of those who are practitioners of that faith.

I am not going to say that we should have shariah law; I’m going to leave that for later in the debate. But what I want people to do is just take a good, long breath before you stand up and talk, as some of the members have, because so many groups in Canada don’t understand it, and therefore you cling to the fact that because they do not want shariah law, somehow it must be inherently bad and inherently evil.

I will tell you, there are far more people in the world who live under some form of shariah law than there are Canadians—far, far more. Most of those people find that it is acceptable within the tenets of their faith and what they do and how they react to others.

As I said before, and I think it bears repeating, there are many branches of Islam. I would invite all of you to go out and see the differences in the communities that exist right here in our province and in our various cities and towns. You can go out to a Sunni gathering and you will see people who are traditionally conservative in their dress. You will often see women who wear the *habib*. You go out to the Sunni faiths and you will see that they are very much, if I can draw the parallel, like born-again Christians. They hold that fervour in their faith and what they believe. They are very strong in it and they don't want to deviate from it. They are suspicious, on occasions, of others who do not share their faith.

You have Shia Muslims, who have a tradition that goes back to the time of the murder of the nephew of Muhammad. They still wail and beat themselves in sadness over what has happened and how their country and their society and their form of religion is not the predominant one, how they are being marginalized and how they need to fight back and protect themselves.

You will find, if you go into their institutions and their mosques, that they are a little bit more western in style. The women, although they may wear head scarves, will very definitely sit in the same room with the men and interact with them after the religious service is over. You will go in and you will see the Ahmadis. The Ahmadis are a persecuted group, even in Pakistan. They are persecuted because Ahmadiyya, who was their spiritual leader at the turn of the 19th century into the 20th century, did the unthinkable: He set himself up as being a prophet after Muhammad, that he had to bring Islam back to where it was supposed to be going and that the tenet of the faith had to be restrengthened.

Those who are Ahmadis you will find very different again. They're often dressed in Pakistani or Indian-type clothing. The women are often in the mosque, although they may be in a separate room from time to time, but all of the parties and things involve all of the people together.

Last but not least, you have the Ismailis. Many of you will have Ismailis in your community. If you go to the Ismailis, they are people who originated mostly from East Africa and follow the teachings and the sayings of the Aga Khan. You will find among the Ismaili people a very western culture. You will find that the people will dress in exactly the clothes from whatever country they are in. They believe very strongly in being involved in the community. In fact, many of them would pay what we used to call a tithe of 10% of the monies they make toward the church and community. You will see the Ismailis out in front of this Legislature each and every year raising funds for research, raising funds for the poor in Africa, for women's institutions and a great many other things.

These are all people who believe in a form of Islam. They are as different as night and day. If you go into their mosque, if you go into the Jamaat Khana, if you go into where they practise their faith, you will know that they are very different. This is the problem I have when members of this Legislature stand up and talk about shariah

law as if it's some monolithic thing that is equally doing rotten things to women and to children. The fact of the matter is that each one of these groups has a different form of shariah, each one of them has a different form of faith, and each one of them interacts with Canadian society in a very different way.

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Back to the faith: I'd just like the talk about Muhammad, peace be upon Him, for a couple of minutes, because people don't understand where this faith came from. You know, I am not a Muslim, but I have great, great admiration for that faith and for the people who practise it. If you go back to its founder, if you go back to Muhammad, what Muhammad did was stark and wonderful in terms of the 7th and 8th centuries. He liberated women. He didn't hold them in some kind of feudal thing. When there were Dark Ages in Europe, he allowed women to attend university. No woman in Europe was allowed to attend university, but Muhammad made sure that women had equal access with men. Muhammad allowed women, for the first time in the history of the world, to sue for divorce, because before that only men could sue for divorce in most societies, and it was Muhammad who said that women had to be equal. Muhammad was the first person, the first religious leader on earth, who allowed women to own property, so that if a husband died it didn't go back to some other relative, but the actual widow—or the daughter, if there was only one person to leave the property to—could actually own and control property. So he was a great liberator of women.

He also was a huge humanitarian and a statesman of unbelievable proportions. He established universities in a time in the Dark Ages, when there were no universities in Europe. He allowed the arts to flourish, and mathematics. If you wonder today where the symbol zero came from, it is algebraic; it is Arabian. If you look at numbers, you had Roman numerals, which people in Europe were using in those days, which were no good; today you learn Arabic numerals. You wonder where the name comes from? It came from then, because of the universities and the enlightenment that that society and that religion brought forward.

He was a believer in the freedom of worship for all of the peoples; what he said, the peoples of the book. He allowed them to worship as they were. He did not force them under the sword or the pain of death to become Muslims. He said that Christians could remain Christians and Jews could remain Jews, which was remarkable for those days, 700 AD. Nobody else did that kind of thing.

Last but not least, he allowed for the freedom of worship of all of those people, but he also allowed them to have their own courts and to arbitrate themselves, something that we are talking about today. As far back as the 7th and 8th centuries, Muhammad was there; he was doing things that showed that he was an enlightened man. When people talk about Islam, when people talk about the history of that faith, remember what it was, for the genius that it was. When we were all in the Dark Ages of Europe, when we had no education and no hope, when

the kings and feudal lords ranged the way they were, there was an enlightened place on this earth and it was there. It was around Mecca; it was in Arabia. It was in the lands where the Muslims went out, where they established all of those universities and places of faith in India and in Europe and in the Alhambra in Spain. If you ever have a chance to go there, look at the glory of what that was and what that society was.

So when people stand up here and talk about the shariah and when they talk, I think, in very cloaked but dangerous phrases about Islam, I have to tell you, it pains me greatly.

I want to get to the bill, though. I've still got eight minutes left. You know, I have no real difficulty in saying that there should be one law for everyone, and I have no real difficulty that we all submit to that one law, but I am not naive, nor do I think the members opposite should be naive to the same extent that that one law will magically and somehow really come about. Because it begs the question, and it was brought up by the member from Whitby—Ajax, that if we think that everybody is subject to Canadian law and that there can be no differences in our society, then why do we have two school boards in Ontario? Why do we have that? I heard the minister say it's historical, and yes, it is. We have the Manitoba school question. We have the whole question at the time of Confederation. We have the whole thing in our past saying that "there shall be," in order at that time, I think, to protect the minority, but the reality is that today the largest single religious group in Ontario is the Catholics. They are the largest single group. They are the majority, not the minority. They have their own school system, and there is a public education system for everyone else.

Now I'm not here advocating at this time, because that's not the topic before us, whether or not we should have this. But I am telling you that when a debate like this is opened up and says, "There shall be only one jurisdiction for all Ontarians; there shall be only one law for all Canadians," then you have to ask, is this going to come under attack next? I would think that if this law passes, then there are going to be more busloads of children and more busloads of teachers and principals and parents like were here in the last couple of weeks talking about this selfsame issue.

If we are to say, as Ontarians, that there can be no deviation, then why do we permit deviation when it comes to education? If we are say, as Ontarians, that everybody has to be the same, then we should be prepared in all of our communities and in all of our public institutions to expect people to be the same.

There are alternatives. I've seen what Newfoundland did. We've seen what Quebec has done, used the notwithstanding clause when it came to religion, and I suppose what we could use in circumstances like this. I don't know whether Ontario is ready for that debate, and I want to leave that for another date.

I have six minutes left, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to say that this action of this government appears to have bludgeoned faith-based arbitration, at least as it openly

existed. People go to these faith-based arbiters because they have faith in them, and I mean faith in the true sense, that they look upon this as being a respected person in their community who will treat both sides fairly. They do not go to faith-based arbiters or indeed to any other arbiter because they think that that person, male or female, will be biased. Surely, one side or the other will not go to a biased arbitrator. You would not go, and I would not go.

But the reality is that some people in our society have more faith in their religious institutions and their religious teachers than they have in lawyers and courts—is that a surprising thing?—probably more faith than they have in some politicians. They go there because they have that kind of faith that they will be treated fairly. They believe they will be treated fairly, not necessarily within the four walls of what the Bible says or what the rabbinical codes say or what you can read in the Upanishads. They find it because they believe in the person from whom they are seeking the arbitration.

I looked at what the minister had to say, or listened to what the minister had to say, and I'd just like to quote him very briefly for the record, because if this is what the intent is, then maybe this is a good intent. Maybe you should just let the faith-based arbitrators continue if this is what the minister intends. I'm quoting from his speech which opened this debate:

"It also authorizes the regulation of Ontario family law arbitrators for the first time. If this legislation is passed, we will have the authority to, and will, require Ontario family law arbitrators to be members of a recognized professional dispute resolution organization, and to undergo training, including training in screening parties separately for power imbalances and domestic violence. We will require, in addition to the training, that they inquire into such matters of power imbalances and domestic violence. Lastly, we're requiring that family law arbitrators keep proper records and submit reports, to be tracked by the Ministry of the Attorney General."

1800

Now the minister did not go on and say what that means. Does that mean someone who is a rabbi, who is presently doing family law and conducting himself or herself in an exemplary fashion, will be allowed to take this kind of course, submit reports and continue what they are doing? I don't know, because we are not clear yet on what this law is going to mean. Does it mean that someone who is an imam can do the same—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: I am being told that I'm running out—it's 6 o'clock.

Mr. Kormos: Just keep going, Michael.

Mr. Prue: Keep going. OK. I'm being told to keep going.

Does that mean that someone who is an imam cannot continue to do what he has been doing in terms of the arbitration process? Does it mean that someone who belongs to a Christian fundamental movement or the Catholics, who has up until this time run small arbitration seminars and tried to help people in their daily lives, will

be allowed to continue if they submit to the course? I don't know.

Those are the kinds of things we're going to have to find out.

Interjection: Keep going.

Mr. Prue: Yes, keep going. I've got lots of stuff to say.

An arbitrator has a difficult job. I don't know if any of you have ever tried to do it. I certainly had no formal training, but I was called upon many times as the mayor of East York to arbitrate matters. I remember one arbitration in particular which involved family disputes of two neighbours. There was some mischief and vandalism done to one house; in turn, mischief and vandalism done to another. There were threats of legal actions and of courts. The police were called in. A young lad was charged. There was a great deal of difficulty. As the mayor, I had to sit down with the two sides, who agreed to my arbitrating. The thing was solved in about half an hour. The charges were withdrawn against the young boy. The damages were paid for, and those two people are still neighbours and I think, even to this day, they talk to each other. It was resolved.

Had that gone to the courts, we would have had a young man possibly with a criminal record. We would have had very many entrenched feelings around the neighbourhood on one side or the other, and certainly those two neighbours would have been unlikely to have ever talked to each other again. More than likely, one or the other or both of them would have moved away in order not to be near them.

This government—and I've got 53 seconds—is talking about protecting women, a very laudable goal. I'm not sure that this act is going to do it. If you truly intend to protect women, might I suggest that you implement the entire Hadley report, and do it with dispatch; might I suggest that you staff up and run homeless shelters in much greater numbers than you have; might I suggest that you put in money for assisted housing so that women have somewhere to go if they're being abused; might I suggest that the majority of people on welfare are single women with children and that the pittance you give and the 3% you gave in the last budget are simply not enough. You need to speed up the courts hugely in order that they can get the kind of protection they need so that we don't have the violence and death that visited a young nurse in Sarnia.

Mr. Speaker, I think my time is up. I wish I had more, but thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

Mr. Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Am I correct that upon the completion of the 20-minute discourse by my colleague, there is then 10 minutes allocated to questions and comments, two minutes of which are reserved for the member for Beaches—East York? I simply wanted the Chair's direction in that regard to find out—Mr. Bradley is probably—

The Deputy Speaker: At least give me a chance to answer it. Yes, you're correct, under normal circumstances. But we're being pressured by time this evening.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting this evening's sitting and that, notwithstanding this motion, today be considered a full sessional day of debate on Bill 27.

The Deputy Speaker: You heard the motion. Do I have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House earlier today, the House sit beyond 6 p.m. for the purpose of completing consideration of Bill 16, An Act respecting the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve, following which the Speaker shall adjourn the House until tomorrow at 1:30.

Interjection: Carried.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Speaker get a vote in this?

You've heard the motion. Agreed? Agreed.

DUFFINS ROUGE AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA RÉSERVE AGRICOLE DE DUFFINS-ROUGE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 16, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 16, An Act respecting the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve / Projet de loi 16, Loi concernant la Réserve agricole de Duffins-Rouge.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My caucus feels very strongly and passionately about this legislation. We feel that there has been precious little consultation on quite a bit of legislation, and therefore we really would like to see this go to committee. I know we have the nodding and concurrence of my colleague from St. Catharines, who has agreed to that, and we are very pleased at that. So we'd like to reserve any further debate until such time as we can go to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate? No more members wish to speak.

Mr. Ramsay has moved second reading of Bill 16, An Act respecting the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I believe the consensus developed, and I will move this, that it go to the standing committee on general government.

The Deputy Speaker: So ordered.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1808.

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Kuldip Kular, Norm Miller, Richard Patten,
Michael Prue, Monique M. Smith,
Norman W. Sterling, Kathleen O. Wynne
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Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 29 November 2005

Mardi 29 novembre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 29 November 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 29 novembre 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TORNADOES

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): Today I am standing up once again on behalf of the townships of Centre Wellington and Mapleton, the county of Wellington and the Grand River Conservation Authority to demand additional financial assistance from the government to help with the losses we have incurred as a result of the August tornadoes.

In this House, I have characterized the amount of provincial assistance announced to date as insufficient. Here is what Centre Wellington township's mayor, Russ Spicer, now says of the government: "I am requesting that you reconsider the financial burden that must be borne by Centre Wellington and its six municipal partners, which were included in our original submission to you." Mayor Spicer has correctly complained about the fact that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has arbitrarily reduced our grants by 4% of the municipalities' "taxation for own purposes," which cuts Centre Wellington's allotment by a whopping \$234,000.

In 2004, this government boasted about its generosity to the city of Peterborough when it granted over \$20 million to help that community respond to a flooding disaster. But did they cut back Peterborough's grant by 4% of its "taxation for own purposes"? No, they did not.

Clearly, the minister has discretionary power to determine the dollar figure of a special assistance grant. If the minister fails to increase tornado assistance to the communities in Waterloo–Wellington, then his treatment of my municipalities will be nothing short of mean and miserly.

Again I call upon the Minister of Municipal Affairs to meet with officials from the townships, the county and the GRCA and give them the financial assistance and respect they need and deserve.

HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Today I would like to tell you about the fact that the holiday season has come to Nipissing. The holiday spirit is alive and well in

the district of Nipissing and particularly in the communities of North Bay, Mattawa and Powassan.

Last Sunday, thousands of North Bay residents, young and old, enjoyed the Disney Santa Claus parade. The crowd was entertained by 45 floats. I would like to thank the downtown improvement area for hosting the mayor; our federal member of Parliament, Anthony Rota; and I on their It's a Small World float. Thanks to Jeff Serran, Pat Kenzie Diegel and the students at E.W. Norman Public School, with their teacher Betty Brown, for organizing and decorating such a fabulous float.

This past Friday, we celebrated the lighting of the downtown Christmas tree in North Bay, and the downtown merchants hosted thousands of visitors at the downtown Christmas walk. My constituency office was delighted to host hundreds of constituents with hot drinks and Christmas cookies and festive music. It was a real community celebration.

Congratulations again to Jeff and all the downtown merchants. What a way to welcome the holiday season to our area.

This Friday, December 2, the town of Mattawa will be hosting its twilight Santa Claus parade. I want to thank the Mattawa volunteer firefighters for taking care of me on Friday and making this parade possible.

The town of Powassan began its Dickens Christmas celebration this past weekend, and I will be enjoying the Dickens country craft fair this coming Saturday. There will also be church teas, singalongs and a big skating party.

Congratulations to all the organizers who ensure that the residents of Nipissing celebrate a very festive holiday season.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): Yesterday we learned that the McGuinty Liberal government is crippling physiotherapy care to seniors and disabled persons. Despite the promises of "enhancing physiotherapy services for highest-need Ontarians," the McGuinty government has cut funding to OHIP-funded physiotherapy for seniors and disabled persons, leaving thousands of Ontario long-term-care residents cut off from further OHIP-funded physiotherapy this year.

The government has cut the overall budget from approximately \$75 million at the end of 2004 to approximately \$52 million this fiscal year. Decreased access to physiotherapy treatment for seniors and disabled persons:

It has been lowered from the annual maximum of 150 treatments to 100. Also, they are now saying that they are going to further cut the funding level for long-term-care residents in 2006, and they are proposing to pay for an average of only 49 treatments per bed in long-term-care homes.

The government is doing by stealth now what it did not do overtly in April. First, they delisted optometry services. They're going to be delisting chiropractic services. We now know that the physiotherapy cuts are causing hardship for the most vulnerable people—our seniors and the disabled.

RESEARCH AWARDS

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): I'm delighted to tell you about the McGuinty government's continued commitment to research and innovation in this province. Under the new early researcher award program, our government is providing \$6.4 million to universities across the province to assist gifted researchers and their teams of students on some innovative new research projects.

In my riding of London North Centre, \$900,000 has been allocated to researchers at the University of Western Ontario. I'd like to tell you a little bit about one of the researchers.

One researcher who will benefit is Dr. Kristy Tiampo. Dr. Tiampo is leading a team that will compile data on small earthquakes and changes in the earth's surface. Using powerful computers, this team will develop a large-scale model of fault lines. Using the data they've found, they'll be able to get an indication of when and where earthquakes are likely and how strong they might be. The findings from this project will improve the ability to forecast earthquakes worldwide, saving countless lives.

Some other researchers receiving awards are Dr. Donglin Bai, Dr. Brian Corneil, Dr. Frederick Dick, Dr. Kathleen Hill, Dr. Wei-Ping Min, Dr. Xingfu Zou, Dr. Richard Rozmahel and Dr. Juan-Luis Suarez.

I would like to congratulate all these recipients from the University of Western Ontario on their excellent work.

Investments like this reaffirm the importance our government places on strengthening Ontario as a leading innovation-based economy and society.

1340

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): In the 2003 election, Premier McGuinty signed a pledge not to raise taxes and to abide by the Taxpayer Protection Act. We all know the Liberals broke their promise in about six months, instituting the largest tax hike in Ontario's history, known as the health tax. Now they want to break their promise again by eliminating any requirement for

the people to be consulted if the province allows a municipality to charge a new tax.

What does this mean for taxpayers? If the McGuinty Liberals let municipalities charge you a sales tax, you will have no say. If they allow a local income tax, you will have no say. If they allow any other kind of new tax, people across Ontario will have no say.

Ontarians are already upset at rising income taxes, property taxes and hydro rates. They don't want any more taxes from any level of government. We all know that this bill is a leadup to giving new taxing powers to the city of Toronto. This government should be on notice that our party will continue to stand up for the taxpayers of Toronto and the taxpayers of Ontario. They are already paying too much.

NORM MCINTOSH

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Last Tuesday night I was thrilled to be present to see Norm McIntosh, a music teacher from my riding, win MusiCan's music teacher of the year award. The award is a new initiative of CARAS, the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. It pays tribute to dedicated music teachers across Canada, but recognizes one in particular who has positively influenced his or her students, advanced music in the community, and who exemplifies MusiCan's mandate to enlighten, empower and elevate.

The new award is sponsored by the legendary rock band the Rolling Stones. After Norm McIntosh, the Stones were the highlight last Tuesday night, with their video congratulating Norm on his work and wishing him well in the future.

Norm McIntosh is a fabulous music teacher and a great believer in young people. Twenty-six years ago, when he started teaching music at Confederation high school in Val Caron, he was told, "Make it work, or there will be no music in the school." With 24 students and a very small array of instruments, he created the school's first rock band.

The music program grew, so did the band, and both followed him to whatever school he went. Now back at Confederation, he has 150 students in the music program, a touring rock band called Evolutionary, a full stage crew and, as of this year, students recording in a new, professionally soundproofed music room.

Everything Norm has done has been about the kids, supporting and promoting their love of music and their performing, recording and technical talents. Congratulations to Mr. Mac, who so clearly deserves this award, and many, many thanks for making such a difference in the lives of these young people.

OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I'm pleased to rise in this House and announce that our city, including my riding of Ottawa-Orléans, has received funding for 95 new positions for police officers. There will be 55

new positions, including 18 in areas that support the province's six targeted priority areas and 37 to support community policing. We're also receiving retroactive funding for 40 existing positions, of which 35 will be in areas that support the province's six targeted high-priority areas, two will be in an area that promotes efficiency in the justice system and three will support community policing. There will also be two additional case managers.

Improving efficiency in the justice system has been the goal of the Ottawa Police Service for the past two years. The additional funding for these 95 positions will further increase community safety by putting new officers on the street and by targeting specific areas of concern. With the addition of the new case managers, there will be improved resolution rates and we'll have more management on criminal files. As well, we'll have more officers on the streets.

To quote our very own police chief, Vince Bevan, "We could not be more delighted with this announcement by the provincial government. For years," under a previous government, "our service did not receive its fair share of provincial funding. This announcement rights those past wrongs. Today we can all say that the city of Ottawa received its fair share. We can now move forward and manage our growth in a proactive way that responds to a clear and growing community need in Ottawa."

Clearly, our police organizations are in favour of this change. We're proud that these new officers will soon be patrolling our streets, ensuring that our communities are safe.

YORK REGIONAL POLICE

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Yesterday, along with York Regional Police Chief Armand LaBarge, Police Services Board Chair David Barrow and Regional Chair Bill Fisch, I announced that the York Regional Police force will receive 100 officers as a result of the McGuinty government decision to put 1,000 officers on the streets. In the 905 region, 281 officers have been allocated. The Toronto police board received 250 officers.

With the surge in gang violence that has troubled our cities since the summer, it is obvious that we need more officers. Our government has responded to this need with a number of initiatives; notably, the gun amnesty program, the guns and gangs task force, and by fulfilling its commitment to put 1,000 officers on the streets.

While much of the gun violence has occurred in Toronto, the 905 region is not immune to crime. Gun violence is not the only problem plaguing our cities. Our communities are also dealing with marijuana growing operations, illegal drug use and illicit massage parlours. A boost to police forces will help to catch the people responsible for these crimes so that the people of Ontario can feel safer in their communities.

I commend our government for moving swiftly to put these officers on the street and for investing in the safety of our communities.

YOUTHLINK

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I rise today to congratulate Youthlink, a successful youth counselling agency located in my riding of Scarborough Southwest. Youthlink has recently been awarded grants from the Ontario Trillium Foundation totalling \$225,000 for renovation completion of their main building on Warden Avenue and for program support.

Youthlink was created in downtown Toronto in 1914 under the name Big Sister Counselling Service, offering a wide range of programs for young women. The agency eventually began offering services to both women and men, and—due to lack of services, increased poverty and the growing youth population of Scarborough—moved to its current location in Scarborough Southwest about two and a half years ago to better serve its core constituencies.

It is agencies like Youthlink that contribute to youth making positive life choices. Youthlink does this by identifying and reducing barriers to self-sufficiency, healthy sustenance and constructive behaviour and by helping youth help themselves.

Youthlink has grown into a diverse multiple-service agency. In 2004-05 alone, Youthlink assisted 491 individuals with counselling services, 605 individuals with community outreach services, and 5,180 individuals with inner-city street outreach services. Further, Youthlink is equipped to deliver service to Caribbean, Sri Lankan, Indo-Canadian and Cantonese clients.

Again I congratulate Youthlink on receiving needed funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation so that they can continue serving my constituents and young residents across the city.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I beg leave to present a report on electoral reform from the select committee on electoral reform and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms. Di Cocco: I'm pleased to report to the House that the select committee on electoral reform has tabled its report.

First of all, I want to thank Larry Johnston, the researcher, and Anne Stokes, the clerk, for all of their work, as well as the committee members for their valuable discussion and contribution to the process.

The report looked at various electoral systems and the current system. The systems we looked at were STV, MMP and the AV system. It based its analysis on actual systems, not theoretical ones. We found that no system is a panacea to addressing voter turnout, youth engagement

and gender representation. We also found that each jurisdiction has local, cultural and jurisdictional uniqueness that varies each system. Electoral reform must also take into consideration the Legislature, the parties, and the values of stable government. We looked at BC and other areas to learn from their experiences.

I'm pleased that we were able to table the report today. Hopefully, it will be valuable reading for all.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the member wish to make a motion?

Ms. Di Cocco: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING FINANCEMENT DES UNIVERSITÉS ET COLLÈGES

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): Today is an important day for colleges and universities in Ontario. I am pleased to tell the House that this morning our government announced the first allocation in its new quality improvement fund. It is a fund set up to promote excellence at our post-secondary institutions.

Grâce aux fonds pour l'amélioration de la qualité, le gouvernement mettra plus de \$ 211 millions à la disposition des collèges et des universités pour qu'ils puissent prendre des mesures immédiates et mesurables pour améliorer la qualité. Il s'agit d'un nouveau financement de plus de \$ 211 millions, qui est disponible cette année.

Through the quality improvement fund, the government will make more than \$211 million available for colleges and universities so they can take immediate, measurable steps to improve quality. That is more than \$211 million in new money, and it is available for this year. It is a tangible sign of our government's commitment that students in Ontario will get the very best education possible. This fund is part of a 14% increase in operating grants to colleges and universities this year under Reaching Higher, our plan to rebuild the foundations for learning by investing \$6.2 billion in post-secondary education.

How will students see their education improve by the quality improvement fund? Today, the Premier, myself and the MPP for Don Valley West visited the Glendon campus of York University. York is receiving \$9.8 million from the quality improvement fund. It is using the money to hire 50 more full-time faculty. This will improve student-teacher ratios, allow the university to renew curriculum offerings and enable it to develop new programs. It is using the money to improve accessibility. A new on-line service will make sure eligible students

know about, and are considered for, financial assistance. It is using the money to help students with special needs: More staff and technological resources will be made available for testing and exam requirements to make sure everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. And it is using the money to support its unique character: One of York's specialties is interdisciplinary programs. Over 20 faculty will be hired for these programs.

In the coming weeks, I expect many more allocations from the quality improvement fund to be announced. These allocations will draw upon three different pools in the fund to target specific needs. First, there is the advancing quality fund. It will support hiring new faculty and support staff, acquiring additional learning resources for students and developing better student supports. Next, there is a supporting excellence fund. It will support each institution as it works to achieve excellence in its particular area of specialty or fulfill its unique mission. Finally, there is the change fund. It will support cross-institutional or system-wide improvements.

There is another important aspect of the quality improvement fund. So far I've spoken only of inputs and desired goals. We're investing more than \$211 million to improve quality for students. How will we know if the results are being obtained? How can we be sure that every dollar results in quality improvement for students and that the money is well used? Prior to the release of these funds, each institution will sign an accountability agreement with the government. These agreements will set out how the money is to be spent and what the anticipated results will be. This government is committed to working with publicly funded colleges and universities to achieve results for taxpayer dollars. Achieving accountability requires clear roles, responsibilities and expectations. Results, to be meaningful, must be measurable. In short, we want to make sure that every dollar flows to the benefit of students.

These agreements will also encourage our post-secondary institutions to strive for excellence and sharpen their focus on quality. Study after study has found that education is the key to future prosperity, both for the individual and society as a whole. Indeed, virtually every job created today requires some level of education or training beyond that of high school. For that reason our government is determined, through the Reaching Higher plan, to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to get the education they need to succeed. The quality improvement fund will help ensure that higher education in Ontario is the very best possible.

QUALITÉ DE L'EAU WATER QUALITY

L'hon. David Ramsay (ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones): Je suis heureux de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour informer les députés que ce matin, la ministre Broten et moi-même avons annoncé un investissement provincial

considérable dans le cadre de la protection des sources d'eau.

This investment is part of the McGuinty government's ongoing efforts to ensure a safe, reliable supply of drinking water for all of the people of Ontario.

Tous les habitants de l'Ontario ont droit à une eau propre. Nous avons tous et toutes la responsabilité de la protéger.

Protecting water at the source is the first step in making sure Ontarians can turn on their taps with confidence.

This morning, we announced that the government is providing grants and funding totalling more than \$67 million to conservation authorities and municipalities to ensure that local communities have the science, knowledge and capability they need to protect their drinking water sources. This investment will help municipalities and others map watersheds, analyze water quality and quantity in watersheds and identify potential threats; enable municipalities to assess threats to drinking water sources; and ensure that conservation authorities have the staff, resources and information necessary to continue to work with local communities in developing source water protection plans.

Last year, through similar initiatives with municipalities and conservation authorities, the McGuinty government began to lay the foundation for strong and effective source water protection across the province. The further investment we are making today will build on that foundation and ultimately build Ontario's overall capacity to better understand and manage our source water resources.

Our government understands that to keep our drinking water clean, we need to keep pollution from seeping into our streams, lakes and rivers. This investment will help us strengthen the prevention component of what Justice Dennis O'Connor calls a "multi-barrier approach" to clean water protection.

The first barrier is to protect contamination at the source, which requires the kind of local water protection planning capability we are supporting with today's announcement. Over the past two years, this government has made excellent progress putting a number of other barriers in place. We've set tough training requirements for those who operate municipal water systems; we've hired more inspectors; we've increased the frequency of inspections for municipal water systems and the labs that test our drinking water; and we've introduced environmental penalties, along with a community cleanup fund to guard against industrial spills affecting drinking water and the environment.

The McGuinty government knows that ensuring a safe, reliable water supply for the people of Ontario is an obligation, not an option. Minister Broten and I continue to work with the municipalities and conservation authorities to meet that obligation and to support our government's goals of a cleaner environment, healthy, prosperous communities and a better future for all Ontarians. Merci.

CULTURAL FUNDING

SUBVENTIONS CULTURELLES

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Ontario's cultural and entertainment industries have become world leaders in a broad range of sectors, including television production and children's literature. They employ more than 45,000 people and contribute over \$7.7 billion per year to Ontario's economy. They promote our identity as a people and a province, celebrating our achievements and reflecting our values.

Ontario has the vision, talent, expertise and determination required to produce international hits. Take the example of the Deglassi series of TV shows. I recently had the opportunity to visit the Deglassi set upon the occasion of their 25th anniversary. Starting with The Kids of Deglassi Street through to its latest incarnation, Deglassi: The Next Generation, this series has been honoured with two international Emmys, 14 Gemini Awards, two Prix Jeunesses, as well as other honours at festivals around the world. Deglassi: The Next Generation is so popular that when an episode dealing frankly with the issue of teenage pregnancy and abortion was prevented from airing on US networks, thousands of young American fans signed petitions to protest the decision.

1400

As Linda Schuyler, the series executive producer and a former high school teacher herself, has said, "If they're talking about it in the schoolyard, we should be able to talk about it on television." People have been talking about Deglassi for 25 years now, and the show is more popular than ever.

Linda Schuyler is with us today, accompanied by her father. Please stand up.

To mark this 25th anniversary, I would like to greet her and to extend our most sincere congratulations to her, her partner, Stephen Stohn, and her all-Ontario crew.

Merci, Linda, et bravo pour les succès.

Notre gouvernement prend des mesures pour renforcer les six secteurs des industries culturelles et des divertissements en augmentant les crédits d'impôt. Il s'agit de la production cinématographique et télévisuelle; de l'édition de livres et de revues; de l'animation et des effets spéciaux informatiques; des médias interactifs numériques; et de l'enregistrement sonore.

One year ago, the Minister of Finance and I jointly announced a \$48-million enhancement to film and television tax credits. Industry sources have reported that this helped to boost production activity over the past year. Film and television production in Ontario generates \$2 billion per year and employs 20,000 people.

The 2005 budget features enhanced tax credits for interactive digital media, including computer animation, book publishing and sound recording, as well as a \$10-million strategic investment in the Canadian Film Centre for new programs.

Les industries culturelles et des divertissements de l'Ontario améliorent notre qualité de vie et véhiculent nos histoires et nos idées auprès d'un public mondial. Ces activités méritent que le gouvernement les soutienne. Les mesures que prend notre gouvernement témoignent de son engagement envers le développement culturel de l'Ontario et des industries qui sont le fruit de nos activités.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): What we don't do as often as we should is to recognize the good work done on behalf of Ontarians and improvements in customer service. Today I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to tell the House about the great work that is happening at the Family Responsibility Office.

Shortly after our government took office, I took a drive up to FRO, and what I saw really took me by surprise. The systems there were downright antiquated compared to what we see in most businesses today. I remember in particular that it was such a paper-based system that the staff actually wore white gloves to protect their hands from all the paper cuts from managing, handling and re-handling paper. To this day, I have a pair of those white gloves in my desk drawer to remind me of how things used to be.

In February 2004, we announced initiatives aimed at improving services at FRO to help families get the support they are entitled to. Last week I had another opportunity to visit FRO and talk to the people who are making such a difference in the lives of their clients. Each week since February 2004, the customer service unit has diverted up to 3,500 calls from enforcement agents so that these agents can focus on enforcement instead of routine questions. Taking the less complex calls away from the enforcement staff has shown impressive results: The FRO handled over 600,000 calls between April 2004 and March 2005, more than a 70% increase from the same period two years ago; average call centre wait times have decreased from 13 minutes to eight minutes; and there has been a 75% increase in the number of callers who are able to get through on their first attempt.

We know we have miles to go, but I want to say a very heartfelt thank you to the people at FRO who work so diligently.

Customer service has also been improved thanks to more than 180,000 personal ID numbers that have been issued to clients to help them access their case information through the automated phone system 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Since February 2005, clients have been able to get information on the last five payments made to their case. You can't do that at your own bank machine.

An arrears file review project was launched in November 2004, with an ambitious goal: cleaning up almost 39,000 cases representing \$639 million in arrears. Since

that time, 23,500 of these cases have been reviewed, \$13 million has been collected on cases where no money was ever received prior to the arrears file review, and there has been a \$41-million arrears collection.

Then there's my personal favourite: the trace-and-locate initiative, or, as I've been known to call it, CSI Downsway. FRO's ability to track down defaulting payers has significantly improved thanks to this team's success in using every available resource to track down obsolete addresses and phone numbers and keep payers' information in our database current. Trace-and-locate exceeded everyone's expectations, handling more than 2,500 pieces of mail each month, and had a search success rate of over 55%. As a result of this team's effort we've been able to tighten up enforcement and collection and are better able to help more payers meet their support obligations.

How about that credit bureau initiative? This is where we said, "Who would have thought that simply letting people know they were going to be reported to the credit bureau would result in over \$157 million collected?" And that's just since January 2004. Way to go, FRO. Overall, FRO's collections have gone up 3% in 2004-05 over the previous year, and the compliance rate—those are the cases that are in good standing—is at 68%. That is a big hand that goes to FRO for such a tremendous job.

The great work that's happening at FRO is being praised by clients across my ministry. It's also being recognized for excellence in customer service and client satisfaction, receiving a bronze award at this year's Public Sector Quality Fair. We went there specifically to say "congratulations" for that bronze award.

We'll continue to build on the successes I've already told you about. We're well on our way to moving to a brand new, proactive case management approach at the FRO, and we're bringing in technology to support it. This is technology that will finally bring FRO into the modern era—no more white gloves, no more pre-Industrial Revolution technology. Thanks to the support of this House and, may I say, supported by all members of this House, our new legislation is going to help us strengthen the FRO's enforcement powers, make further improvements so that the FRO works as efficiently as possible, and help make the system fairer for the parents who do honour their obligations and responsibilities to their families.

I want to recognize the hard work of all the staff at FRO, because these successes are the product of their hard work. Recently, FRO came together to create a vision statement that will guide their work into the future. It says, "Our vision is to work together with our clients and partners to ensure support responsibilities are met. We do this by developing constructive relationships, addressing challenges and treating everyone with fairness and respect."

As my office has moved forward to contact all the members' offices here in all the 103 ridings, we have also heard from your staff, who have told us that the calls to your offices are down. The calls we are still getting have

become quite complicated, which tells us that there is more work for us to do. But I can say, on behalf of all members of this House, how proud I am, through the directorship of Sharon van Son, of all the staff people at FRO, many of whom may be here watching today, because we want to say thank you, something that we don't do nearly enough with our civil service. We have tremendous staff; we can show great progress. Thanks to the support of this House and the Premier and the budget process, we are able to go even further to helping parents meet their obligations and taking care of their families. On behalf of all members of this House, thank you to the people at FRO.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I thought that today the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities would have announced the agreement with the off-campus work for international—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. There are a lot of conversations going on around. It's difficult for me to hear.

Member for Burlington.

Mr. Jackson: —would have announced part of the off-campus work for international students, but then when I read the federal government's press release today it says, "Implementation of this program will begin once federal government funding is approved." Seven months ago, the minister was in this legislative chamber announcing the quality improvement funds. We now find that it's taken him seven months to pull this together, and we still do not have the details of your agreements.

1410

It's a matter of record, Minister, that your predecessor cancelled the multi-year faculty renewal funding that the previous government had approved and budgeted and had begun flowing. The fact is that she surrendered her cabinet post in favour of your being there, but the truth is that you haven't provided it for the last two years, and now, with four months left in this fiscal year—you've passed the September window for hiring new faculty; you're going to pass the window for faculty renewal for the second semester—we'll be fortunate if we can get this money out the door in such a short time.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): In the short time I have to respond to the Minister of Natural Resources' announcement of \$67 million for water assistance with technical studies to assist municipalities, I would say that part of that announcement was \$51 million over five years. I wish they'd just stick to the next two years, because beyond that, hopefully there's going to be a change of government.

I would like to point out that certainly the quality of our water is so important to all of us, and it's very im-

portant for me, representing a riding like Parry Sound-Muskoka, where our very quality of life is connected to the quality of our water. We have had problems in recent years—this year, with Three Mile Lake, and in other years on Georgian Bay with Sturgeon Bay.

I would say that the municipalities I've talked to would like to see more assistance from the Minister of the Environment in particular. They feel frustrated that they don't get assistance when they're actively trying to do something to improve the water quality.

If I have a suggestion for the Minister of the Environment, it would be that they become more proactively involved in developing new septic systems that make new technologies available for people to use, and approve new technologies so that we can use those technologies to protect our lakes.

CULTURAL FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): First of all, in commenting on the minister's statement today, I want to recognize the many talented people we have in the province, and the opportunity to be able to flourish in the province through the very many areas we have. I'd certainly like to recognize Linda Schuyler as well, and appreciate the long history and the success of the Degrassi heritage, I'd almost say.

In the comments the minister made, she referred to the fact that it was a year ago that she was able to join the Minister of Finance and make an announcement with regard to film tax credits. I'd remind the minister that that came after our leader, John Tory, pushed the government to act. You may recall that the then Minister of Finance said he didn't want to participate in the unhealthy bidding war, upping and upping tax credits. Our leader then called a news conference with members of the film industry to demand action from the Liberal government, and demanded that the Liberals keep their promise to increase film tax credits. So I certainly think that while we recognize the importance of enhancing the tax credits, let it be known that it was at some instigation on this side of the House.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I never thought I'd see the day when Minister Papatello would boast about a 68% compliance rate. That mark wouldn't get you into any university in Ontario. Imagine boasting about 32% of spouses and children waiting for their support and never receiving it. I would suggest that you leave your white gloves in your desk, roll up your sleeves, get them dirty and get helping these vulnerable lives.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'd like some order. I'd like to hear what the members are saying, and I'm not getting much co-operation on it.

We'll all listen to the member for Beaches-East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): For more than 20 years, before I became an elected public official full-time, I, too, was a public employee. What I learned in all that time being a public employee is that when the public employees did good work, when they showed initiative, when they really got things going, it was the politicians who stood up and tried to take the kudos.

I salute the public employees who have done a remarkable job here, but I have to tell you that they have sometimes done so with the very lack of commitment that this Legislature has given them.

I'd like to look at some of the statistics here. The average call centre wait times have decreased by some 40%. That's fine, but the waiting time is still far too long. If we are committed to the public, that waiting time should be zero, not just down 40%. There should be no waiting time.

It says here that there has been a 75% increase in the number of callers who are eligible to get through on their first attempt. Since we go back to that time when less than 10% could get through on their first attempt, I can only assume now that 15% are getting through on their first attempt, which means that most people—the overwhelming majority—cannot get through to this line in spite of the improvements.

Last but not least, it says that the arrears file review project was launched in November, 2004, cleaning up 39,000 cases. But I want to tell you, of the 39,000 cases, only 23,500 have been reviewed, which means that 15,500 cases are sitting there and haven't even been opened more than a year later.

I want to tell you that I salute the people who work there. They need more resources. If the minister truly believes that these people have done such a tremendous job, just think how much more money and resources and how many more public employees, dedicated as they are, could really improve this situation and have the people of Ontario proud of it.

CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): The Minister of Culture states, "Ontario's cultural and entertainment industries enhance our quality of life and bring our stories and perspectives to a global audience." No disagreement. Then she says, "The measures which our government is undertaking demonstrate its commitment to Ontario's cultural development and the industries our creativity has spawned."

I wondered whether the minister might want to comment on the fact that their government—her ministry—is forced to sustain a 7% cut. Given your commitment to Ontario's cultural development and given all that blah, blah, blah about how important you think that is, did you ever bother to fight the cuts that you have sustained in your ministry, and how do the 7% cuts in your ministry help to sustain cultural development in our province? It's a question to think about.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): Mr. Bentley made an announcement today. It was clearly pointed out that the \$200 million will only flow once the federal government funding is approved. It makes it appear that they're putting in their own money and that this money will flow immediately, only to discover that the money will only flow once the federal government gives it the money. How strong is the provincial desire and commitment to put in its own money to bring about the kind of quality that we're all looking for at the post-secondary level?

It reminds me of the \$6.2-billion promise this government is making around the improvements they want to make in the post-secondary sector. The \$6.2 billion will only arrive by 2009-10. Very little is front-loaded; most of it is back-loaded, and it's back-loaded in a year where this government may or may not get elected. How can they make a promise about something that reaches beyond their own mandate?

Quite frankly, I am getting tired of Liberal governments, federal and provincial, making big announcements about dollars to support our institutions. They are not dollars within their own mandate, but expended beyond their mandate. I've got to tell you that it's tiring me, it's tiring some of your Liberal staff and it's tiring a whole lot of Ontarians who are sick and tired of it. If you want to make a commitment around post-secondary education, make your commitment for this year and for the next, and only up to the point that you're elected. Don't give me any money beyond that mandate, because we don't know whether that money will flow. We don't even know whether you're going to get elected. So I'm getting awfully tired of your announcements.

1420

VISITORS

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm very proud of my page from Burlington, Katherine Wilson, who led your procession today. As page captain, she follows in the footsteps of her sister Lauren, and is joined in the Legislature today by her parents, Rick and Susan Wilson, and by her grandparents, Bill and Bette Wilson. Please welcome them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That's not a point of order, but we certainly welcome you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. On September 11, 2003, you signed the following pledge: "I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise ... that I will not raise taxes or implement" any "new taxes without the

explicit consent of Ontario voters....” Further, “I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act.” Premier, why did you sign this pledge?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I can only divine from that question that what the leader of the official opposition is getting at is the Respect for Municipalities Act, and in particular our party's and our government's support for the city of Toronto. I assume that's what he's getting at.

There is no doubt about it: We are strongly in favour of doing everything we reasonably can to put the city of Toronto on a stronger footing, because we understand on this side of the House that a strong Toronto makes for a stronger Ontario. The leader of the official opposition may not be in favour of that. He may choose to disregard that reality.

We are working hard, and I'm proud to say we're working well with the city of Toronto. We've had in place a process that has been very effective. It has culminated in a very substantive report, which we're now carefully considering. Shortly, we'll be introducing new legislation that will have the effect of putting the city of Toronto on a stronger footing.

Mr. Tory: Of course we all support the need for a strong Toronto, but that was not the question.

You have introduced, at the last minute, your so-called Respect for Municipalities Act, which really should be called the disrespect for municipal taxpayers act, and you are removing, through that bill, one important test that was to precede the introduction of new taxing powers given by the provincial government. You supported that test in writing when you said you would support the Taxpayer Protection Act.

Your new bill will give to municipalities the right to raise taxes on top of the \$2,000 in new taxes and charges and fees and hydro bills that have been brought in by the McGuinty Liberal government. When I asked about this issue two week ago, your minister refused to rule out any municipal tax hikes on your watch, and we now see why. Are you prepared to look taxpayers in the eye, then, and say that you were wrong to sign the Taxpayer Protection Act pledge in 2003? Were you wrong to do that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It is hard to determine just on which side of the City of Toronto Act Mr. Tory stands, because he's not prepared to do what is absolutely essential to recognize their distinction as a mature, responsible level of government that we're prepared to work with and put on a stronger footing. He's not prepared to recognize that, although on May 7, 2004, he said the following: “We have to re-examine completely the relationship between the municipal and provincial government to give city governments more latitude to raise some of their own revenue if they choose to do so.”

I agree with the statement made by Mr. Tory then. Perhaps he would stand up and tell us why he has now decided that he's not prepared to support the city of Toronto in putting that city on a stronger footing for the benefit of all Ontarians.

Mr. Tory: The question was why you signed the Taxpayer Protection Act, saying that you would submit

any proposed new taxation power to a referendum before it was done—why you did that. The question was not whether or not I supported the reform of the relationship between Toronto and the provincial government.

At least one city councillor in Toronto has talked, even today, about raising taxes for people in this city thanks to the powers you're giving to them. He had this to say: “I've never been worried at being first at the trough,” and, “If you can afford to drive a car, you can afford an extra five bucks or so”—in taxes—“to go to public transit.”

This bill was introduced in a hurry, your people are telling us you want to get it through in a hurry, and you're about to strip away something you signed up for, which was to give individual taxpayers the right to have their say before you gave this power to municipalities. I'm only asking if you're prepared to take away the meaning of your own signature. Would you at least guarantee some hearings so people could come and be heard on this piece of legislation and on what you are doing, which goes back on what you signed?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I would ask the leader of the official opposition to reflect upon the conversation he would have had with Mayor Miller, wherein he indicated he would be supporting the new City of Toronto Act. He might want to give some thought to that. But in case he's forgotten, I'll quote from a letter that Mr. Miller sent to me. He said, “Toronto's fiscal sustainability is in part related to the new revenue tools at its disposal. It would be regrettable indeed if a bold, visionary initiative of your government is hamstrung by the ongoing impact of the actions of the previous government. I would like to encourage the provincial government to take action to eliminate the impediment to reform of Ontario's enabling legislation and future option for Toronto's overall fiscal framework.”

I say to the leader of the official opposition that he cannot have it both ways. We've decided to do what is essential to ensure that the city of Toronto is put on a stronger financial footing. We're prepared to do that because we believe in Toronto and we believe that a stronger Toronto makes for a stronger Ontario.

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): That was a lecture from the master of having it both ways who signed the Taxpayer Protection Act.

Again to the Premier: Why has your government been steadily cutting back on enrolment at the Ontario Police College since you took office?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): The Ontario Police College has the capacity to take in new recruits, and they have not been cutting back on it. They have been taking them in as they come. Not only have we not been cutting back but, in anticipation of the 400 officers who are

going to be hired between September 23 and March 31, 2006, we asked the police college to hold open spaces so those particular officers in fact can get in and we can get them out on the streets as soon as possible.

Mr. Tory: That's very interesting. Let's look at the facts. According to the registrar of the Ontario Police College, the facility that trains the new officers, in 2003, 1,113 new recruits were trained. In your first full year in office, that number dropped to 954. This year the number has dropped again, to 906 in the training program. That is a 19% reduction. The Ontario Police College has a capacity, as you well know, of 1,440 training spots. They've had that capacity since the previous government doubled the number back in 1997. If you are really as serious about putting more police officers on the streets to fight violent crime as you say you are, why have you allowed a 19% reduction in those spaces at that college to take place on your watch?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: The Leader of the Opposition raises issues he truly doesn't understand. Just so you will know, we do not have any control over what officers are sent to the police college. The police services hire recruits and send them there. In some years they don't hire as many, and in other years they hire more.

What we have done as a result of our initiative to put 1,000 police officers on to the streets of Ontario during our mandate is to make sure we've accommodated those who have already been hired, to get into the police college. We specifically made sure spaces would be available for them. That is just the way the system works. We do not determine who goes to the police college; the police services themselves send their recruits to the police college.

1430

Mr. Tory: The minister well knows that people can't attend the college if there are no spots for them there, and I can tell you what I do understand: that there's a 19% reduction in the number of spots at the police college.

The story only gets worse: I have a memo sent by your assistant deputy minister notifying all chiefs of police of a 40% increase for the cost of basic constable training at this college. If you were committed to getting these 1,000 police officers on the streets by, say, the end of 2006 instead of at the end of 2007, because they are needed now in communities across this province, then you would deal with this 19% reduction that you have brought about in the enrolment there and you would deal with the 40% fee increase you have imposed on the police services of this province.

My question is, will you guarantee that the Ontario Police College will operate at capacity this year to get your police officers on the street by the fall of 2006 instead of by the fall of 2007, as you announced?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: The Leader of the Opposition contradicts himself. He says they have capacity, and he says that capacity is not filled. Then he says, "Can you guarantee that there will be capacity?" Which way does it go?

The other thing you should know—and if you do your homework, you might find out—is that there used to be

no charge at all for recruits to go to the police college. Your government—the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, when they were the government—instituted the first fees for officers going to the police college.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. On Saturday, November 26, the Oxford Health Coalition held a community-wide plebiscite asking citizens in Woodstock and surrounding communities if they wanted a new hospital that is 100% publicly owned, publicly operated, publicly funded and not-for-profit. Over 7,000 people voted, and 97% said yes to a real public hospital and no to the profit-driven, privately financed P3 hospital of the McGuinty government.

My question is, will you listen to the people of Woodstock and the surrounding communities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I want to lend some comfort and reassurance to those people who may have voted on this particular matter and let them know that we are absolutely committed—in fact, as much as they are—to ensuring that our new hospitals are publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable; we're absolutely determined. I would encourage my friend opposite to pass that information along so that these people may have their concerns allayed.

The fact of the matter is that we are doing exactly what Ontarians want us to do. They want to get their hospitals built as quickly as they can. They understand that in many instances we're talking about plant that is 40 years old. They want us to take advantage of every possible opportunity by way of financing to get those hospitals up and running, but they want us to ensure that those hospitals remain publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable, and that is what we will do.

Mr. Hampton: This is Dalton McGuinty a couple of years ago. You referred to P3—private financing, profit-driven—hospitals as “creeping privatization of health care.” You said, “I stand against the Americanization of our hospitals.” You said that “private, American-style, two-tier health care” will result. The people in Oxford county know that.

But I want to ask you about the people of North Bay, 9,000 of whom voted in the North Bay Health Coalition's hospital plebiscite. Again, 97% of voters said they want a real public hospital, not the private financing, profit-driven hospital of the McGuinty government. They know, as you used to say, that this leads to two-tier health care. If you won't listen to the people of Oxford county, will you at least listen to the people of North Bay?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: My response to the people of North Bay is the same as to the community raised earlier by the leader of the NDP. I know he wants to fan the flames and foment discontent, but the fact of the matter is that we are very much committed to ensuring we are

building new hospitals in Ontario. My friend opposite may not see that as an important issue, but we see it as a very important issue. We do intend to take advantage, where it makes sense to do so, of private capital, but the important thing is—because that helps us achieve a public end, which is a new, publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable hospital. Our objective remains the same, but the problem is that the leader of the NDP fails to understand that we've got a responsibility to take advantage of any new opportunities, including the teachers' pension plan, for example, that they want to invest by way of financier for these kinds of new hospitals. But, again, they will be publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable.

Mr. Hampton: I swear I heard Ernie Eves answer that last question. In fact, you know that the former Conservative Minister of Health, when he looks at the McGuinty private financing model, says, "Well, that's exactly the same as the Conservative private hospital financing model."

I want to ask the Premier about the Niagara Health Coalition's plebiscite, where more than 12,000 people voted and 98% said yes to a real public hospital and no to the Ernie Eves private financing, profit-driven P3 hospital, and no to the Dalton McGuinty private financing, profit-driven P3 hospital. Premier, will you listen to the people of Niagara, who want a publicly funded, publicly operated and publicly administered public hospital like Dalton McGuinty promised?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I've had the good fortune of visiting Niagara region recently, and I can tell you that the people there are absolutely overflowing with enthusiasm for their new hospital, their new regional cancer centre. They are looking for us to proceed as quickly as we possibly can. And I can tell you that they are more and more enthusiastic as they understand more and more that we're talking here about a hospital that's going to serve the needs of the people of the community and, more than just that, it's a hospital that is publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable. That's exactly what the people Niagara are looking for, and that's what they're getting.

WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question for the Premier. Premier, Todd Petahtegoose provided Ontario's police with critical evidence and information around 10 gangster and biker murders. He testified for the crown at the murder trial of Satan's Choice president Michael Dubé. He did this because he was assured by the ministry of the Attorney General and the police that he, his wife and 13-year-old daughter would be safe in the province's witness protection program. But now your ministry has decided that, as of November 30, Mr. Petahtegoose, his wife and his 13-year-old daughter are going to be dumped, they're going to be turfed and they're going to be tossed aside, no longer a part of the witness protection program and left to

fend for themselves. They are sitting not in the chamber because of security, but behind that wall in the members' lounge, watching you on television. Tell them that they will not be abandoned on November 30 by you and your government.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I refer this to the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): The member knows that he is referring to a matter involving a civil claim that is currently before the court, so I can't comment on that claim.

Secondly, I'm sure all members understand and accept that, due to the confidential nature of the witness protection program, we never, ever comment publicly on matters relating to its administration. We neither deny nor acknowledge who is participating in the protection program. We do that to protect the witnesses who are involved and the important confidence that they vested in the state.

Mr. Kormos: The point, Minister: You've already, in writing, told Mr. Petahtegoose and his family that they're no longer going to be protected. I wrote to you on November 17 this year, telling you that this matter was occurring on November 30 and that it was critical. Mr. Petahtegoose's life is in danger. You see, outlaw bikers don't take kindly to being informed on or to being testified against in murder trials.

Minister, after months of violence and murder here in Toronto and your frequent references to the witness protection program and how you're going to use it to encourage witnesses to come forth, how does your abandonment of Todd Petahtegoose and his family reassure any other witness that you're going to secure their safety?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I have utmost confidence that police officers who assist protected witnesses appreciate the difficult situations these witnesses are encountering. I seriously question the judgment of identifying the location and identity of people who are participating in the witness protection program, so I am simply not going to entertain debate on this particular issue any further, in the name of the witness protection program and the safety it provides to the many courageous people who participate in it.

1440

Mr. Kormos: Minister, your witness protection program promised Todd Petahtegoose and his family new identities, medical coverage, health cards, a safe place to live and an allowance to do that with. You have delivered none of that, and now you have turned Mr. Petahtegoose and his family loose with no protection. I say to you, Minister, that it's incumbent upon you to stand up, here and now, and tell this Legislature and that family that you will reverse the decision of your ministry that directed Mr. Petahtegoose that he is going to be relieved of any support from Ontario's witness protection program as of November 30. That's your responsibility.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Again, I've said that on the particular matter the member is referring to, we just simply

do not get into the identity of the people or the details of the witness protection agreement that's been entered into.

I will say that the witness protection program generally in the province of Ontario, which is the oldest witness protection program and the largest witness protection program in the country, has recently been expanded to not only deal with very serious matters involving entire identity and location changes, but also to improve short-term protection to make it more responsive for those people who want to participate in a criminal investigation but don't necessarily want to undertake the very significant changes that can happen under the witness protection program. We're also removing significant barriers and much of the red tape involved in obtaining a new identity and expediting admission to the program.

Again, I have full confidence that the police officers and the witness protection program itself are operating exactly as they should be.

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question for the Minister of Government Services pertaining to the Securities Act: Minister, as you know, when insider trading occurs, insiders get rich and retail investors like seniors and working families suffer harm. There's increasing concern and speculation surrounding highly unusual trading activity related to Finance Minister Goodale's announcement with respect to income trusts. Under section 3.8 of the Securities Act, you have the authority to request information from the OSC on matters regarding their activities. What contact has your ministry had with the OSC to ensure the government of Ontario is taking this issue seriously?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): The member and the public should be aware that the Ontario Securities Commission is an organization that's well regarded and very well run that clearly has the responsibility for monitoring the markets—this is their job—to make sure that nothing untoward or unfair has gone on. This is why we have them. The last thing, in my opinion, that we want to do is have any political interference in that. I strongly recommend that this is a matter that is legitimately before the Ontario Securities Commission. It should be a matter that they handle. They do a fine job for us. I would suggest that we should not entertain any suggestion of any political interference in the operation of it. It is a matter to be left to them.

Mr. Hudak: With respect to the minister, we are seeing no evidence that the province of Ontario has shown concern over the serious and growing allegations of insider trading. The minister well knows there is a significant spike in trading around income trusts. Some high dividend-paying stocks like BCE had their biggest gain in four years. You, sir, have the responsibility, ultimately, of maintaining the integrity of Ontario's markets for our investors, like seniors and working families. There is concern that has been expressed about

previous cases like Placer Dome, Hollinger and the Rankin case that were referred to the OSC from outside jurisdictions. Sure, these allegations today are serious. I know they do involve the federal Liberal finance minister, and that is why we should go beyond caution to ensure that integrity in the markets is maintained.

Minister, you also have section 15 of the act that enables you to order an investigation. Will you utilize the Securities Act to make sure this issue is addressed immediately?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: You are treading on very dangerous ground here if you are suggesting that the government of the day should be telling the Ontario Securities Commission what cases they should investigate and, dare I say, what cases they shouldn't investigate. You should be aware that that power has not been used for decades, for good reason: The Ontario government, I think of all political stripes, has said that the Ontario Securities Commission's reputation is at stake. We should do nothing that would indicate that they are responding to political pressure.

I would strongly advise the Conservative Party to be careful on this question. The securities commission has the responsibility for this. They monitor the markets, they do their job, and they should not be subject to the kind of political pressure that you are suggesting we should influence here. So I would say to the public that we have this organization, well run and well regarded, that monitors the market. They will do their job. If anything untoward happened, they would take the appropriate action. And we should leave it there and not be exerting political pressure on that organization.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Premier. Sadly, yesterday I watched as you broke another election promise. After promising to abide by the provisions of the Taxpayer Protection Act, you broke your promise and raised taxes by \$2.4 billion. Now you have broken that same promise by giving authority to municipalities to levy taxes. I'm not going to cast any aspersions on that, because maybe they need to. But my question to you is very simple: Will you admit today that you have no intention whatsoever of honouring your signature to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I must admit I find this question rather puzzling from an individual in this House who served as a mayor of parts of this municipality, in East York, at one point in time. He well knows that in the 21st century we are in now, it's absolutely essential that municipalities, including the city of Toronto—and most of all, the city of Toronto, which, after all, is the economic engine of this province—have the capacity and the ability to look after their own affairs. That's what we are trying to accomplish with the City of Toronto Act.

The mayor has asked for these powers. AMO has endorsed these kinds of powers. The task force that was set up between the ministry and the staff at city hall asked for these powers. The external review board that the mayor set up to give him advice has asked for these powers. We think this is the right thing to do, and if the member doesn't like it, then maybe he should say why he's against the city of Toronto having the types of powers it needs to function properly in the 21st century.

Mr. Prue: What this member doesn't like is your party and your leader trying to have it two ways: signing the Taxpayer Protection Act and then doing something to the opposite. You have to choose which side you are on. You can't be part of this and then part of that; you have to be one or the other. You can't have a happy, smiling face with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and a happy, smiling face with the mayor.

I have to repeat my question to you: Do you admit that you were wrong in signing to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, and do you promise not to abide by what you promised them in September 2003?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I think the much more relevant question is whether or not that member over there, as a representative here in the city of Toronto, supports the people of Toronto and supports the city of Toronto in wanting a new City of Toronto Act. That's what it's all about in the long run. The people of Toronto want to know where you stand as their representative in this city as to whether or not you believe that the city of Toronto should have more powers, both at the fiscal end and at the legislative end, in order to restructure itself—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. Minister, thank you. I would like to hear the reply as well as the question, so it will be helpful if you'll do that.

1450

CLEANUP OF BROWNFIELDS

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I want to raise the issue of brownfields with you. I know you are well aware of the difficulties created in my riding by these challenging and sometimes orphaned sites. Property values in neighbouring areas are diminished and these sites are often targets of dangerous acts of vandalism. Neighbouring residents face an increased risk of crime and negative health and environmental impacts. Clearly, this is an economic issue as well as a health and safety one, and something most certainly needs to be done. Unfortunately, the city of Brantford and municipalities across this province are the ones left to initiate and cover the costs of the cleanup or the destruction of those abandoned buildings that are left on the site.

Minister, I know our government takes this issue very seriously. Can you please tell us what your plan is to help us clean up those brownfields once and for all?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Let me first of all congratulate

the member for being so consistent on the redevelopment of brownfields. He has brought this issue to the foreground over at least the last couple of years.

We all know there are brownfield sites in all our communities, basically abandoned industrial sites, that have in many cases lain vacant for the last 50 years. It is through initiatives like the provincial policy statement, the greenbelt and the growth plan that our government has demonstrated the important role that brownfield development can play in preventing sprawl and preserving green space while addressing our growth management challenges.

Last year, in October, the Ministry of Finance introduced a brownfield incentive program that allows municipalities to give municipal property tax assistance for the purposes of redeveloping these sites. Our ministry is taking the lead in coordinating the brownfield initiatives for this government. We meet monthly in order to develop a one-window approach so that we can finally start dealing with something that has been ignored by governments in the past, and that's the redevelopment of the brownfields.

Mr. Levac: Thank you very much, Minister. You're getting there. We've got some more work to do. I know you acknowledge that it's a very important issue in all of our municipalities. In the platform you and I both ran on, we said we wanted to develop brownfields. I'm pleased to see that we've got these acts so far and the commitment to continue to do more.

Our Places to Grow strategy, through managed growth in the greater Golden Horseshoe, shows Brantford as one of those growth notes. I know our commitment to cleaning up the brownfields will play an integral part in assisting my community to grow, as it will others. Brantford has put in the business case of working together with the federal, provincial and municipal governments. In my view, Brantford has been ahead of the game on brownfield redevelopment, but we need your help.

Minister, could you outline for the House some of the benefits to municipalities of having a brownfield strategy and how the McGuinty government might get us there, because we desperately need this help?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I can tell the member that not only am I getting it but our government is getting it, because we absolutely have to do something about brownfields. They represent an opportunity for neighbourhood revitalization; the creation of jobs and housing, quite often in the downtowns of our communities; the enhancement of public health and safety through the clean-up of contaminants; and strengthening the municipal property tax base, which is extremely important as well. They also provide a unique opportunity for intensification, something that our government has identified as a priority, as we expect an additional four million people to settle in this province over the next 30 years.

Our government is currently in the midst of developing a work plan that will tackle some of the barriers to brownfield development dealing with liability and taxation issues. The end result will be that municipalities will be able to take advantages of the results of our

consultation. It's certainly this government's hope that a brownfield strategy that will look after all of these sites will be developed and—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The question has been answered. I might say that I have the time well under control and I don't need any help from the opposition.

OBSTETRICAL CARE

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Health. Three general practitioners working out of the Pembroke Regional Hospital have recently announced they will no longer deliver babies after December 15 if the unacceptable situation they find themselves in is not addressed. Under your watch, the Pembroke Regional Hospital, which delivers between 600 and 700 babies a year, is down to one obstetrician. This minister is forcing some people in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to travel as much as 250 kilometres to Ottawa while in labour to have their baby delivered. Is this reduction in services to rural Ontarians what they can expect? Even in spite of your punitive health tax, is this what they can expect in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): One really has to question the tone of a member whose riding itself has been the recipient of a wide variety of community-based investments, with several quotes littering my House book—positive quotes—from the honourable member about our government. Why is it that he comes to Queen's Park and says one thing, but when he's in his riding with me, he says such very nice and positive things? I just don't understand it.

On the issue at hand, which is a very serious one, obviously there has been a real trend away from the provision of obstetric services. Fewer doctors all the time have been inclined to provide these services, and it does create a particular challenge in smaller communities. I don't think it's an acceptable circumstance by any stretch that people should have to travel this distance.

I'll undertake to work with the honourable member and our local health integration network and the leadership of the Ottawa Hospital, which plays a crucial backup role for higher-risk births, to see what can be done about this. I know the Ottawa Hospital has been very helpful in stabilizing a program at Winchester hospital and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The answer has been given.

Mr. Yakabuski: The minister has indicated I'm a very good host when ministers visit my riding. I'm in his riding now. I expect to be treated well here.

Minister, a lot can go wrong in a three-and-a-half-hour drive to Ottawa while someone is pregnant and ready to deliver a baby. A lot can go wrong in the middle of winter, in freezing temperatures in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. It is not good enough to

talk about nice things we say about what you're doing in my riding. We appreciate any help we get. However, this is a serious situation. I would ask that you would address this before we read about some terrible event in the newspaper because there was a terrible tragedy between, say, Whitney and Ottawa because obstetrics were not being provided at the Pembroke Regional Hospital. You're the minister. You must address this. Do so.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: It's fine and dandy for the honourable member to stand across the way and point his finger and pretend that local hospitals don't have any role and responsibility related to the provision of care in their communities. The only problem with the strategy is that it's not true.

The circumstances are clear: Pembroke Regional Hospital has received more than \$16 million in additional funding from our government since it came to office. But I have undertaken with the honourable member to work with him on this issue, which has only just come to my attention a few minutes ago. I agree that it's a serious one. I said in my earlier answer that I think that is a very long stretch to be dealing with. Accordingly, I will work with the honourable member to have this addressed. I've already indicated to him that I think the Ottawa Hospital, which plays such a critical role for backup, particularly as it relates to higher-risk births, can be helpful. I'll be relying on their good offices to assist us in addressing the situation, which I think all members very clearly would agree is a serious one. I will undertake it on that basis.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. In 2004-05, your ministry allocated \$55.9 million to the preschool intervention program for children with autism. The program pays for IBI treatment for children with autism. Given the wait list for IBI treatment, how is it that in 2004-05, \$2.7 million from this program was not spent by your ministry and was directed to child welfare instead?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I'm happy to address the question, even though I know that the member knows the answer. The reality is that those dollars, while originally allocated to support teachers for the provision of consultants in the schools, were not spent on that because there weren't enough consultants to allocate those funds to. The dollars instead were assigned to child welfare, because I think you would want to agree that the importance of protection of our kids, whether they be in special-needs programs, whether they be in schools or whether they be in our child protection system, should be a priority for all of us.

1500

Ms. Martel: If I might, Minister, the information you've provided to the House is not correct. The allocation of \$55.9 million was for the preschool program—the very program that pays for IBI treatment for autistic

children aged two to five. This has nothing to do with the hiring of consultants for something else.

At the same time as the ministry was sending autism treatment money somewhere else, there were 287 children waiting to be assessed to see if they would qualify for IBI treatment. There were 399 children who had already qualified for treatment who were languishing on a list, waiting for treatment to begin. Hundreds of parents faced, and continue to face, financial ruin, trying to pay for IBI out of their own pockets while you diverted \$2.7 million of treatment money somewhere else.

I ask you again, Minister: When there were 399 autistic children on a waiting list praying for treatment, how could you ever have diverted \$2.7 million somewhere else?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Just before you get up, Minister, would the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke please be a little more discreet?

Minister.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: The member knows that our government is committed to not just caring for all kids who have autism spectrum disorder, but we are also committed to increasing the capacity of the continuum services that we have to support these children and families. We have introduced a new college-level program which will graduate, starting next year, 100 additional therapists for this program, and by the year 2008 there will be 200 more therapists enrolled in this program.

We know there's a lot more to be done. We would like to assess everyone and treat everyone quickly. We have improved the assessment time and we're working now on improving the time it takes to get these kids into therapy, and we will continue to do so.

ANTI-TOBACCO ADVERTISING

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is to the Minister of Health Promotion. Last week, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health released results of the 2005 Ontario student drug use survey. Results showed that the prevalence of students smoking in grades 7 to 12 is at its lowest rate since 1977: 14%. However, in this same report, 57% of students indicated that it would be easy or very easy to get cigarettes. Minister, how does our smoke-free Ontario campaign address this issue of access and the problem of youth smoking?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I'm very proud of the McGuinty government's record on this issue and the decisions we have made to discourage young people from starting to smoke or help them to quit smoking, in particular our award-winning Web site, which just won two more awards last week. Stupid.ca, which is an innovative, interactive site that has been designed by and for students, had received in the last year 842,000 visits, which is a record for this kind of site.

Also as part of our \$50-million smoke-free Ontario campaign, we have allocated \$5.6 million for youth-oriented programs such as the Youth Action Alliance.

I also want to commend the member from Ottawa-Orléans for being very involved with the exposé program in Ottawa that was started by the public health unit.

These youth-oriented programs that have been designed by young people, for young people and supported by our government are going to have a wonderful impact to encourage more and more people not to smoke in the first place.

Ms. Di Cocco: Last week, Premier Dalton McGuinty received the smoke-free award, presented jointly by the Association of Local Public Health Agencies and the Ontario Public Health Association. The award recognizes the commitment by the Premier and this government toward a healthier, smoke-free Ontario.

It's both a contrast and puzzling that some members of this House are promoting smoking by supporting Mychoice.ca. I was surprised to find that a member of the Conservative caucus came to my riding to chair a meeting for Mychoice.ca, which supports smoking. How is the medical and scientific community viewing our efforts to encourage smoking cessation, which in turn will save lives?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I, too, was shocked when I read in the Sarnia Observer that a member of the Conservative Party was actually out chairing a meeting of the pro-tobacco industry in Sarnia, Ontario. I would challenge the Leader of the Opposition to rein in the right-wing renegades in his caucus and tell them that it is not their responsibility to be in the back pocket of the tobacco industry.

What a contrast between our leaders: Last week, our leader was honoured by the public health agencies for the work he's done for a smoke-free Ontario; the leader of the Conservative Party allows members of his caucus to be pawns for big tobacco.

Last year in this province, 16,000 people died of respiratory diseases as a result of smoking—44 people a day. That party over there should be ashamed of themselves. Exactly one half of them either didn't show up to vote for smoke-free or voted against it—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. New question.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Stop the clock for a second. Order. I'd like to hear the question.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Minister of Agriculture: Minister, for months now you've claimed to be working with the federal government on both CAIS and companion funding. We've seen billions of federal dollars promised but less than 120 million federal dollars for Ontario grain and oilseed farmers, nothing for beef, nothing for tobacco and nothing for horticultural crops. Could you explain to the House, Minister, what went wrong?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I will say to the honourable member that while I am not in a position to comment on the reason or the rationale that's behind any federal government announcement, I'm very happy to stand in my place today and say that the McGuinty government continues to work with agriculture stakeholders in this province and with representatives from United Voice. We have made it very clear to them that we are prepared to consider their proposals to this government. They have made it clear that they believe that the resolution to the very serious issues that you have identified requires a longer-term plan as well as a more comprehensive plan, and we will continue to work with them.

There's no question that the federal announcement last week does require us to go back to that table and assess our options, but make no mistake: Our government continues to be committed to the agriculture industry in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Barrett: Well, Minister, and I do quote from your government's speech from the throne: "Ontario is working with the federal government to improve our system of safety nets." However, Ontario Federation of Agriculture president Ron Bonnett, United Voice, says, "This does not even begin to recognize the hurt experienced by Ontario farmers."

Minister, is this the deal: 40% of less than \$120 million for cash crop, 40% of nothing for beef, 40% of nothing for tobacco and 40% of nothing for horticultural crops? Is this the deal, Minister? If not, what is the deal, or, as you say, are you just going to continue working with the federal government on this?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I think it's important to clarify that the comment Mr. Bonnett made was with respect to the announcement made last week by the federal government. If the honourable member very carefully reviewed what United Voice has been saying about the work that they are doing with our government, he would find that the response has been very positive and that they continue to look forward to working with us. We—both United Voice representatives and this government—recognize that if there is to be a meaningful, long-term solution for agriculture issues, it is going to require the participation of all three.

The federal announcement last week, you would know—I sent out a release—was disappointing. It was not as comprehensive or as long-term as we had hoped. We will continue to work with our agriculture stakeholders to have the federal government understand why it's in the better interests of this industry that those points are considered and addressed.

1510

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question to the Premier. It is the McGuinty government's stated policy to remove the revenue cap that applies to Ontario Power Generation's non-regulated assets at the

end of this year—a move that experts say would result in a drastic increase in hydro rates on April 1, 2006. On almost a weekly basis, companies are making decisions to close paper mills and cut thousands of jobs because of your government's stated policy of removing the Ontario Power Generation revenue cap.

My question is this: Will you stop the loss of thousands more jobs, particularly in the pulp and paper sector, by announcing that you're going to keep the revenue cap for at least two more years and stop another drastic increase in hydro rates?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I thank the member for the question for the seventh time. I have been saying all along that we are in discussions on this issue, and those discussions are ongoing. That's the answer.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, while you dither over there, here is the result: 525 jobs at Cascades in Thunder Bay last week; 40 jobs at Weyerhaeuser the week before that; another six paper mills and, beyond that, some sawmills, with thousands of jobs at stake.

Companies are making decisions now, so I think it's time for the McGuinty government—are you going to extend the revenue rate cap and save thousands of jobs in vulnerable communities, or don't you give a damn? What's it going to be? If you're going to extend the rate cap, will you announce it now so that those jobs can be sustained and those companies won't make decisions to close paper machines and lay off thousands more workers? What's the decision going to be?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I find it fascinating that this gentleman, whose party closed 14 sawmills, suddenly has a great conscience. As a matter of fact, just recently Domtar closed a mill, and the mill was in Quebec. If you look at the reasons, they are: downward pressure on prices; growing fibre supply costs; yes, energy costs; transportation costs; the strengthening of the Canadian dollar; and labour costs that exceed those of their competitors. That was in Quebec.

We are going to build new generation that has brought \$3 billion worth of business into this province, we are maximizing our existing generation and transmission, and we are creating a culture of conservation. Combined, we are making a difference in this province, unlike the government that cancelled all of those programs.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): My question is for the Minister of Labour. I know that the health and safety of Ontario workers is a top priority. In fact, our government has demonstrated its commitment to the workers of this province by promising to hire 200 new occupational health and safety inspectors. Our government has demonstrated leadership in working with Ontario's companies and Ontario workers to support their competitiveness in the global economy. The health and

safety of Ontario workers is an important component of our success in building the best workforce on the globe.

Our government has proven it believes in the importance of workplace safety by nearly doubling the number of inspectors. However, given that there are almost 300,000 workplace-related injuries every year, with about 100,000 serious enough to require people to miss work, the need to realize this promise is painfully evident. Minister, can you tell this House when the government plans to achieve its promise to hire 200 new health and safety inspectors?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): The health and safety of the workers in this province is the number one priority for the Ministry of Labour, and I'm extremely proud of that. I'm extremely proud, too, that we've been able to move forward on the front of bringing new health and safety inspectors forward. When we took office, there were 230 inspectors looking after health and safety in Ontario. We made a commitment to move forward and hire an additional 200.

I'm pleased to tell you that by the end of March 2006, we will have 430 health and safety inspectors in this province. Our goal is to ensure that Ontario workplaces are the safest in the world. But more importantly, the initiative helps reduce unnecessary human suffering. To date, we've hired 131 of those 200 inspectors, and I would let everyone know that the job advertisements have been placed to hire those additional 69, so that very soon—as I say, by the end of March 2006—200 additional inspectors—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The question has been answered.

Ms. Marsales: This is a proud achievement, and I'm certain my constituents and all of Ontario will be happy to hear that the government is fulfilling its commitment to hire these 200 new health and safety inspectors. These injuries add costs to the Ontario economy. They place a substantial burden on Ontario's health care system.

Minister, I know that these occupational health and safety inspectors are well-trained, dedicated professionals. But could you tell us more about what the new inspectors will do, and how bold investment will benefit Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I think we need to recognize that this is an investment in future prosperity here in the province of Ontario. As well, business needs to look at this as an investment that's being made to help them reduce their costs. We have a very ambitious goal in place to reduce workplace injuries in this province by 20% by 2008, and we're well on our way to doing that. By reducing workplace injuries, we ensure that we have a more productive workforce, but as well, that saves business money. We need to ensure that we find every way that we can to find savings for those businesses but, as well, protect the health and safety of our workers. So certainly one of our important focuses is on the enforcement of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, because we want to make sure that we have quality, safe workplaces in this province. We want to work toward reducing work-related injuries, and deaths as well.

Another important aspect, and something we all need to be conscious of, is the work that they're going to be doing in enforcing health and safety for our young workers. These are our future, and we need to make sure they get started—

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been answered.

EDUCATION

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Premier. I would like to draw your attention to a looming crisis in our school education system. I'm referring to an article in the Toronto Star and other media that states that the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board has launched a public postcard campaign to pressure you, Premier, to fix the \$17-million shortfall in their budget. You would know that 80% of their budget is about wages and benefits. Annie Kidder, for example, from the advocacy group People for Education, is quoted as saying, "There are few places left to borrow from and most boards have used up their reserves."

In the past, you've really had a secret dome agreement, the silence of the agreement that you've got with the boards, to not speak out that their financing problems—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Question.

Mr. O'Toole: Minister, could you simply tell me today, and the Catholic board in Peel, what you're going to do about this current salary gap you have with the educational system in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The member opposite raises a real concern, and I know that the Minister of Education is addressing this. I know that they're working with the board. My understanding is that the minister may even have made the agreement to meet with the board. But I know it's a real issue. It's something where we will work with the board in order to find a way that we can together address this.

Mr. O'Toole: Thank you for that very cogent response, Premier. I'll just say, this is just one of many looming challenges that appears under a mismanagement plan of Dalton McGuinty. You tried to build this era of confidence and cordiality, but I'm just going to mention a few more items that are looming crises in education. One is special education; we've heard today from both opposition parties that special education is a challenge. Another one, Premier, is transportation. The shortfall in busing in education is another challenge, but a new one has emerged. The Kawartha-Pine Ridge board, in Jeff Leal's riding, is experiencing a 23% increase in the cost of energy, a further deficit of \$1.3 million.

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Premier, just stand and tell the people of Ontario that you're going to fix it. Tell them how you're going to fix it and when you're going to fix it, because this is affecting the safety and future of our children in this great province of Ontario.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: If there is one area in particular for which I feel a tremendous amount of pride in terms of the efforts made by our government, it is in the area of education. There was an interesting report put out recently; in fact, they talked about it in today's paper. I had a copy of the report pulled for me. Interestingly enough, it said, among some things, that 87% of parents are saying that reducing class sizes is an effective way to improve the quality of education. Seventy-four per cent of Ontarians gave our public schools an A or B grade. The report in today's paper was that we were rated the highest in Canada, together with Alberta.

I think we have gone a long way toward restoring confidence in public education. We've gone a long way toward helping all Ontarians understand that the single most important way that we can improve our prospects for growth and prosperity so that we can improve the strength of our democracy, so that we can enrich the quality of enjoyment of individual Ontarians' lives, is to continue to invest in and support—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I have a petition from people who want to save Rideau Regional Centre, which is a home to people with developmental disabilities.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close the Rideau Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing the Rideau Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the Rideau Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"Therefore we, the undersigned"—115 people—"petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government" of Ontario "to keep the Rideau Regional Centre open as a home for people with developmental disabilities and to maintain it as a 'centre of excellence'

to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I have signed that. I'm in full support.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On behalf of Howard Hampton, the member for Kenora-Rainy River, I present the following petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

Howard Hampton has signed this, and I affix my signature as well, with full support.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): "Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

"Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan, with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

"Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

"Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

"We, the undersigned" 850 "petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of patients."

I add my signature to this petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Durham.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Thank you very much, Speaker, for the instant recognition.

"Whereas the Honourable Michael Bryant, Attorney General of Ontario, is elected to safeguard our justice system on behalf of the people of Ontario;

"Whereas the ministry of our Attorney General may not be aware of the serious and important issues facing individuals involved in areas of the justice system even though the Attorney General's ministry is continually monitoring" the situation;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Honourable Michael Bryant, Attorney General, for his in-depth investigation of the Ontario judicial system and [to] make the public aware of his findings immediately."

I am pleased to sign this, certainly on behalf of Bert Werry, being one of my constituents.

MANDATORY RETIREMENT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas existing legislation enforcing mandatory retirement is discriminatory; and

"Whereas it is the basic human right of Ontario citizens over the age of 65 to earn a living and contribute to society; and

"Whereas the provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Yukon and the Northwest Territories have also abolished mandatory retirement in various forms; and

"Whereas ending mandatory retirement is a viable means of boosting the Ontario labour force and accommodating the growing need for skilled workers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Ontario government should act by abolishing mandatory retirement in the province of Ontario. This is best achieved by passing Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign my name to it.

ANTI-TOBACCO LEGISLATION

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): These people want more consultation on the Liberal Smoke-Free Ontario Act:

"Bill 164 Deserves Additional Hearings."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario (legislative committee on finance and economic affairs):

"Whereas House leaders negotiated four days of hearings on the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, but 225 people and organizations applied to testify; and

"Whereas 137 people/associations have not had an opportunity to testify; for example, Avondale Stores Ltd., Ontario Minister of Health, Imperial Tobacco, Ontario

medical officer of health, Taps Tavern, Toronto Councillor Frances Nunziata and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health;

"We, the undersigned, request that the Ontario government consult with the remaining 137 applicants and, subsequently, that this Legislative Assembly committee hold additional hearings."

I agree with this and sign it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DELAYED

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

This has been signed by several people from my constituency, and I have affixed my signature as well.

1530

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here similar to the ones being read. I think it's because there are so many people in the province who think this is such a critical issue.

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to partici-

pate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I affix my signature, as I agree with the petition.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas property assessment now occurs on an annual basis;

"Whereas the Mike Harris government created the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) to deflect criticism of property assessment methodology from the province;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government promised to create a fair and equitable system of assessment; and

"Whereas property values are not related to the cost of municipal services or to the ability of taxpayers to pay,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to immediately create a new system of property assessment that provides property and business owners with fair and equitable assessments that are stable and transparent that a property owner will clearly be able to understand."

I'm in agreement and would affix my signature thereto.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): My petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration" known as wet; "there are other forms of macular degeneration," known as dry, "that are not covered,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should

cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program."

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support of this petition.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario, and it reads:

"Whereas the \$700,000 cut in funding to the Ontario Library Service budget ... will have a significant impact on the delivery of public library service across the province in areas such as:

"—reductions in the frequency of inter-library loan deliveries;

"—reductions in the Southern Ontario Library Service's consultation services and the elimination of a number of staff positions;

"—the elimination of province-wide research on library and socio-demographic trends that all libraries need for their own planning;

"—the reduction of consortia/charitable purchasing, a service that provides economies-of-scale discounts to libraries on a variety of goods and services; and

"—a reduction in the amount of material that is translated for OLS French-language clients;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To restore funding to the Ontario Library Service (OLS) in order to signal support for the Ontario public library system."

I support this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

CELL PHONES

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to read a second petition today on behalf of my constituents.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the safe operation of a motor vehicle requires the driver's undivided attention; and

"Whereas research has shown that the operation of devices such as cell phones detracts from a driver's ability to respond and concentrate on the task at hand; and

"Whereas approximately 40 jurisdictions around the world have already passed legislation to restrict the use of cell phones while driving;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario enact legislation to curtail the use of cellular telephones, as proposed in the private member's legislation introduced by John O'Toole, MPP for Durham."

I'm pleased to present this to Alex and have the table enter this as a document.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR WHITBY-AJAX

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker: As you know, I intend to stand for election to the House of Commons in my home riding of Whitby-Oshawa. It has been a privilege to serve the people of Whitby, Oshawa and Ajax here for more than 10 years. It's also a privilege to have been elected three times and to leave this place voluntarily.

As required by law, in order to seek a seat in the House of Commons, I resign as the member of provincial Parliament for Whitby-Ajax.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): To the member for Whitby-Ajax, we accept your resignation and wish you well in any future undertakings.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOCAL HEALTH SYSTEM INTEGRATION ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR L'INTÉGRATION DU SYSTÈME DE SANTÉ LOCAL

Mr. Smitherman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services / Projet de loi 36, Loi prévoyant l'intégration du système local de prestation des services de santé.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Health for his leadoff speech.

Applause.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I always say that applause is to be earned, and accordingly I hope that my colleagues are still clapping at the end of 30 minutes and that their en-

thusiasm doesn't wane, nor our government's enthusiasm to bring about sensible and long, overdue reform of our health care system.

We're continuing, more than two years into our privileged run as the government in this province, to advance reforms that are challenging reforms, but they are reforms that, at their very heart, have associated with them the necessity of delivering on the word "system."

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker: Could I gain your assistance? It's a bit challenging to have this scrum in front of me.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken a further—

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat, if you wish.

The Minister of Health has the floor. I would ask all members to assist me in my responsibilities so I can hear him.

The Minister of Health.

1540

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

When our government came to office in this province more than two years ago, one of the things we sought to confront was the reality that in our province, where we use the word "system," there is sometimes little evidence that in fact we have a system. Patients have expressed in a wide variety of ways the frustration that sometimes occurs for them as they try to make their way from one part of our health care system to the other.

This conversation was often framed in the context of what was referred to as silos: this idea that one piece of the health care structure might work reasonably well on its own. But as patients sought to make their way across what in health care we reform as continuity of care, there were challenges that they were forced to confront. Accordingly, we thought it was important to do for Ontarians something that was, as I said a couple of times, long overdue. At the heart of it is the desire, in a certain sense, to give real life and meaning to the word "system," and to give patients the opportunity to influence the way care evolves in their communities.

Ours is a government that, on very many occasions, has had the privilege of sharing with Ontarians a vision which is a made-in-Ontario vision. Every other province in our country has moved forward with one form or another of what is often referred to as the regional co-ordination of health care delivery. We're moving forward in a way that is deliberately different from other provinces. We're continuing with the tradition in Ontario of community-based governance, and in fact the principal theme of community-based governance is not only supported in this legislation but it's dramatically advanced.

For people who are looking in from home, some of them will recall that an earlier Conservative government took community care access centres—which had evolved as a community-owned service, if you will, one that had local community governance—and stripped that away by bringing those powers and responsibilities for community care access centres right into the government, where the

government was making all of the appointments with respect to that. We've sought to give strong assurances to the literally hundreds and hundreds of different organizations, from hospitals to long-term-care homes, from community health centres to those 600 or so agencies that are delivering mental health and addiction services right there at the community level, that a fundamental principle that we base our efforts on, this made-in-Ontario solution to the development and real life and meaning of the word "system," was founded on the principle that community-based governance must be there. We're moving forward on that basis.

This piece of legislation, this Bill 36 that is before us, responds to the frustration of patients and it responds on, I think, some very sound, what I would call common sense, principles. The principle that I think we all need to do a better job of accepting is that we're all in an environment with respect to health care. This is in a certain sense some honest talk that maybe some people have ducked too often. But I believe it's fundamental that we acknowledge that as we undertake our work in health care, all of us who do that at the Ministry of Health, all MPPs who express an interest, the hundreds and hundreds of community-based organizations that we have, and perhaps most especially the quarter of a million women and men, 250,000 people working in health care every day in our province, who in their work contribute not just care—they're not just involved in medicare, what we like to refer to in our government as the best expression of Canadian values; they're not just involved in a delivery; it's not just about the provision of a service; it is that, alongside any such provision of service, comes an incredibly powerful contribution of love.

What we've been seeking to do over the last couple of years is encourage people who are involved in the health care sector to recognize that we are all operating in an environment where we will have fewer resources than we would all prefer, and accordingly our government believes that it's just common sense that in any such environment we ask local people, people from local communities who are closer to the action, to help prioritize what local priorities must be established and which things must be funded first.

Not everybody likes to conduct a discussion on health care that acknowledges the limitation on resources, and I had the chance to serve in opposition once too. But I think the reality is clear for Ontarians, and that is, you cannot have health care as a bottomless pit. You cannot have a health care circumstance where health care costs can be allowed to run so far ahead of the pack that they continue to outstrip and outmuscle other important priorities. Accordingly, I'm incredibly proud to be part of a government which has signalled its very, very strong commitment to health care with very steady investments and continual growth in the sector, with specific investments that are done in a strategic way. But we've done that as a government alongside a very high-stature investment in post-secondary education, because we want to be a government that reflects, while it's crucial to provide good-quality services now and forever into the

future, we must recognize that if we crowd out all of those priorities, like the education of our people, then this high quality of life that we have been able to garner through the quality of the people in Ontario, through the strength of their ability to be productive, through their vitality that is expressed through their capacity to add value through knowledge—accordingly, I am proud to be part of a government which believes fundamentally in medicare and which is putting our province on a path to ensure that this medicare system, this great gift to Canadian values, can be maintained for generations to come.

But we do so not in a world where we pretend away our problems, not in a world where we pretend that there are not serious challenges that have to be met head-on. There are previous governments that have come to many of the same conclusions, but it was necessary, in a system that has grown to be \$33 billion large, to stop pretending that you can appropriately micromanage a \$33-billion operation from head office.

There was a question in the Legislature today that indicated this rather well, that we have community-based governance. We install a significant degree of power and influence and responsibility in hundreds of community-based organizations all around the province. Sometimes in this place, as is appropriate—all members should express the views of their constituents—there is a tendency to expect that all things that challenge us in health care—even that smallest, most remote operational issue—can be resolved by the minister's office across the way, at 80 Grosvenor Street on the 10th floor. I just ask Ontarians this, those who are looking in and MPPs who are in this chamber today: Does anyone seriously believe that it is possible to well manage a \$33-billion operation from head office?

I want to talk about the principle that is behind that question. It is the principle of equity. There must be an honest acknowledgement among members here. I have offered it on very many occasions. We use the word "system" a lot, and I believe that one of the fundamental outcomes of a system ought to be the delivery of an equitable result. We have a public health care system. It's a public asset. Inherent in that are the understanding and the clear expectation that because it is owned by the people of Ontario, it should produce for them an equitable result.

But we do not have a health care system that is producing an equitable result. I think what we have to do in order to create an equitable result is to ask people from the local community, who can analyze the population health data and can understand community and work with patients at the community level. They are in a much better position than government, however well-intentioned, from Queen's Park to solve every challenge, and to do so in an equitable way.

As an example, if a government is in a position to make an allocation of community-based mental health resource—and I use that example because it's one that I'm proud our government has been able to make. There was a long time in this province—12 years, over the suc-

cession of two different governments—that community-based mental health resource was not increased; not one iota, not even for those expenses that we all know go up, like our rent and our employment costs. For 12 years, those organizations got no resource. Our government has put \$100 million more into community-based mental health services to expand those services.

But we assume, in making the expansion of services, that the platform that had been developed before that for community-based mental health services—450 different organizations across the province. But as we do a better job of collecting data and analyzing it well, we know that in a wide variety of areas there has not been equitable access to services in Ontario.

1550

Until our government came to life two years ago, Ottawa, the second-largest city in Ontario, had one operational MRI machine—one—for 700,000 people living in the city of Ottawa, not to mention the broader catchment area that we call the Champlain Local Health Integration Network. Since then, because as Liberals we believe fervently in the principle of equity, we have added two more MRI machines and expanded the hours of the one that was existing when we first came to office. As a result, the people of Ottawa have been given evidence by our government, through the work we're doing on wait times, that in some areas where they have not had equitable access to the resource, we have sought to make equitable allocations.

Our government's wait time strategy, where we've invested in 250,000 additional procedures, has been one where we have sought not just to collect data and analyze what wait times were but to make allocation of new resources consistent with our learning. We know that for hips and knees, the Champlain district, which includes Ottawa, has trailed behind other parts of the province. Accordingly we've made larger investments in that community, to address the problems people were experiencing with wait times on an equitable basis.

I drive home the word "equity" because it is the principle that underscores so much of what we're doing here. We believe that if we are to get equity, then we must ask well-informed, well-engaged and well-intentioned people of community interest to be involved in making more of those decisions, because they understand the local ground in a way that well-intentioned people at Queen's Park never can and never will. I drive that point home because it's a critical one.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Only a few more minutes to go.

The bill that is before the Legislature, if passed, will move Ontario forward with a remarkable degree of long-overdue reform, as has been said by ministers of health from previous governments of a variety of different political stripes. I want to speak just a little bit more about some of the particular elements that are in this bill.

First, there is the legislative creation of local health integration networks. I want to respond head-on to

criticism that has come, because there is an attempt to characterize these as some new order of bureaucracy.

I was given the privilege on Thursday, in a scrum outside of this place, to answer a yes-or-no question that I think is at the heart of that matter of another layer of bureaucracy. I was asked a pointed question by Mr. John McGrath of CBC Radio. For those around this place, he's well known for asking good, strong, pointed questions. The question he asked me was, "As local health integration networks have come to life, will we have more employees working in this element of health care administration?" The answer was, "No, we will not have more."

Already the down payment for local health integration networks has been made by the work we've done with district health councils. We're going to roll in that resource, which was costing more than \$20 million—too often, good-intentioned work that had no connection to the power we're giving local health integration networks, the power to actually act out a planning decision.

What our government is bringing together are all of those elements that people who have looked at the system for a long time had been lacking, in one place, under public eyes, because local health integration network meetings will be open to the public, taking place in local communities. It will be a transparent decision-making process that brings together the responsibility and capacity for planning, with decision-making around the integration of services and a decision related to funding.

I stand before you proud to say that I am a Minister of Health who is involved in the devolution of \$20 billion worth of spending authority to local communities, where interested local people will have a much greater opportunity to influence the important health care questions of the day.

Municipal leaders have come forward to me, and sometimes they say, "I had a representative on the district health council, and I don't have a direct appointment on the local health integration network board." I say a few things. Firstly, I say, "What did that appointment get you over the years?"

We've got to be a bit honest about this. We know a lot of good work was done by people working on district health councils, and we sought to make sure that we have captured all the learning they had. All the planning and all the reports they produced will remain there as a back-up, if you will, for the planning work that local health integration networks will undertake. But too often, those good-intentioned folks working in district health councils did so in complete anonymity, if you will, with no connection whatsoever to make impactful the planning work they did, with no real, meaningful capacity to influence the outcome of health care delivery in their local communities.

What I say to those local mayors is, "Imagine a circumstance that you wake up and local health integration networks have come to life, and you look down the list at the nine people from local communities who have come forward and said, 'We will exercise these

important decisions in a transparent way.' What's the reasonable prospect that you're going to be on a first-name basis with some of those people?"

Compare that with the prospect a mayor might now have of getting a meeting with the Minister of Health. I take a lot of meetings and try to be accessible, and I travel around the province of Ontario. But we must not pretend that the current system, the status quo that the opposition and the unions may seem to be so impossibly wedded to in the next little while—that status quo is not performing for the patients of the province of Ontario, and that status quo is a very difficult one to influence.

I told a story in the Legislature the other day. Mr. Tory asked me a question and said, "Give me but one example of how a patient will be positively impacted by the work of local health integration networks." I told him that on a recent visit to Bramalea for the launch of our local health integration network for central west, including Peel and Dufferin, which Mr. Tory represents, two people came together and said to me, "Mr. Smitherman, we work for Hospice of Peel and Hospice Dufferin. For eight years now, we have had an issue about \$20,000 in annualized funding, where there is an historic inequity in the funding between our two organizations."

These are communities the Speaker will well know, because they're not far to the east of the area he represents. These two communities have a lot in common. These two communities have a line that divides them; it's a municipal boundary line or upper-level boundary line. But way more barriers have stood in their way. The barrier that has stood in their way is the current apparatus of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. I'm sure that other well-intentioned people can tell similar stories, where they have had unresolved issues for decades. By turning more of the attention, more of the capacity and more of the power to the community level, we believe fundamentally that issues like that, which have been allowed to fester at unnecessary cost in the form of frustration at the community level, can be resolved in a fashion that is beneficial to patients.

We don't present these as a panacea. We don't pretend that creating a different order for the way that health care is coordinated will resolve all the challenges. But we do believe that when you move forward with a regional structure that brings Ontario 14 distinct areas, where within those areas on a consistent basis you take a look at the population health needs and work hard to marry up the way services are delivered, Ontarians will be the beneficiary. We fundamentally believe that when you're spending \$33 billion, there are opportunities to spend it better. We fervently believe it's inappropriate that over the last number of years, as we've all relied so heavily on the word "system," all the mental health organizations in Niagara had never had an incentive, had never had an occasion, had never in all the years they've been around been drawn together to ask themselves, "Are there opportunities for us to look at the way we deliver our service and perhaps address some gaps that might be occurring?" These things have not happened. But since

local health integration networks have been announced, even before this legislation was brought forward, they have demonstrated how powerful they are, and here are the ways they've done it.

1600

They're changing the discussion about health care in this province. They're taking this really complex health care conversation and presenting it in a way that is consistent. They're making sure that that conversation takes place at the community level, so that if my mom is interested in knowing more about how health care delivery is taking shape in the community where she lives, a little place called Ravenna in the eastern end of Grey county, then she will have a mechanism to be able to do that, one that unlocks the health care conversation for her in ways that have never been available to her before.

It gives her the opportunity for influence too, because Norm Gamble, the chair of the local health integration network for the area that my mom represents, comes from Meaford. There's a reasonable chance, Mr. Speaker—I think you and I both might agree—that she's going to run into him at the scarecrow festival in Meaford, or maybe at the IGA in Thornbury. But the point simply is that people in Ontario—patients in Ontario—are being given an opportunity to influence the play in a way that they never have before.

Already, before local health integration networks have come to life, the CEOs, the board chairs and the other two representatives who have been appointed to date have been out there and have been involved in an unprecedented level of engagement right at the community level: site visits to so many of our agencies that have never seen anyone in a powerful position, the position of being able to exercise power, who have never visited those places before.

Look to the words "local health integration networks," founded on the principles that I've just discussed: equity, community governance and transparency. What we seek is to give people value for their money. I'm an Ontarian and I am a taxpayer, and I believe fervently that our system of medicare is a great system. I believe fervently that it delivers a good result. But I am not one of those who pretends, as the NDP does, that the only way to improve a result in health care is to pour more money into it. I am one of those who believes in strategic investments, and we've been making them in a wide variety of areas. But those people who pretend that the resource to fund our health care system is unlimited—and they have their place in this Legislature and they have their home in the New Democratic Party—remain committed; they grasp, they hold firm to this view that the only answer that ever works for health care is to pour more money into it.

I'm one of those who believes in the principle of continuous quality improvement, and that people from local communities, acting in good faith and with an understanding of those communities, can do a better job of coordinating, of knitting together that vast array of

services we have right now. This legislation is designed to give the people of Ontario more of an understanding of the value they're getting for their \$33 billion.

Roy Romanow said that accountability was the missing sixth principle of medicare, and we agree. That's why we've moved forward to create more accountability in a variety of ways. One of the ways that we will demonstrate the benefit of the work that we've done is by creating a body called the Ontario Health Quality Council, and that body will have the responsibility to report to Ontarians, not in the typical health care way where there are more acronyms than you can get your head around, but in a clear and concise way to give Ontarians apt demonstration of where improvement is being made. In those areas where we're falling short or where perhaps our performance is in decline, those areas will stand out, and Ontarians will have a new tool of accountability, one that they have missed for a long time.

Last week, at the introduction of our local health integration networks, Roy Romanow said this:

"This is another positive step forward for Ontario's important leadership in health care reform. Proper health care reform must be integrated—not piecemeal—and the LHIN legislation is part of the kind of collaborative systems change and integration needed if patients are to feel the full benefits of reform." I think that makes the point very well.

We believe that community care access centres are an important community asset, and I spoke of them right off the top. Consistent with our views, this legislation guides us for a return to community governance of community care access centres, not in a wild way, for sure, but in a way that is studied and that ensures that we create very good, strong local capacity for this. We believe that if we're creating a body of local health integration networks to give us the capacity to help to plan and integrate, we should have community care access centres that operate on the same geographic basis. Accordingly, this bill, if passed, will help to support a consolidation of the number of community care access centres we have at the very highest end.

Before anybody says it in a way that is inaccurate, let me say this clearly and for the record, and if I have to repeat it, I will. What we have been clear to say—and I've raised this very, very directly with the unions, I've raised it very directly with the lead administrators in community care access centres and I've raised it with those from the community who are serving as appointees on community care access centres—is that Ontario has 209 distinct offices, some of them retail-level offices and some maybe a floor or two off the main floor. These 209 offices will not close. Those people who are involved in case management, who are involved in direct client work, who are involved in direct client relationships, will see absolutely no reduction in their employment as a result of our initiatives from community care access centres. We will need to adjust some bargaining units, and that work will be guided by long-standing practices that are respectful of employees and respectful of unions. What

we make sure of with respect to community care access centres is that we maintain a high degree of respect for the very simple idea that community care, those two words, and access, should be locally based, and that the decision-making should be locally driven.

We also believe that there are opportunities to move forward and create a broader role for community care access centres. Other government ministries have wondered—and we will work on this as a government; we will seek input on this—whether it might not be possible to use community care access centres not just as a place that's branded, if you will, related to the Ministry of Health, but with a broader service role. Taking a look at other community programs that are delivered by sister ministries, like the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ministry of Community and Social Services and even the Ministry of Education, we believe that very often one patient or client asks or seeks services or gains services from more than one government ministry. That need not create a circumstance where that person has to deal with a wide variety of people, or even worse, is perhaps drawn into going to a wide variety of different locations. We believe we can create a more seamless capacity, a better customer service orientation, where we deliver more of those community-based services under one roof. There's more work to do on this, but that vision is contained in this legislation. It's something about which we want to talk to people more and more.

In closing, I want to talk about another important element of this piece of legislation, and it operates on this simple principle. I'm just waiting for someone to try to rally the troops, wave the flag and support the status quo. Supporting the status quo, as relates to back office transformation, is standing up, putting up your hand, waving your flag, stamping your feet and saying, "Here in Ontario we want to be a high-cost provider of transactional services." This isn't about client care. When you have a \$12-billion operation—that's our hospitals, really: \$12 billion in government funding and a couple of billion additional dollars from research and a series of other places—when you have an operation that big, there's the odd transaction going on. Big organizations benefit from lower transactional costs, but not health care. The opposition, as they embrace the status quo, will be embracing the idea that we ought to have 155 different hospitals doing their own payroll services; that we ought to have unique functions in each of these places, rather than recognizing that if we bring some of those services together, we can dedicate more of those precious dollars to local health services. This piece of legislation says that if an efficiency is found through an integration or a consolidation, all of those dollars remain in the hands of the local health integration network to reinvest in the important patient priorities that they deem to be the most important priorities in that local health integration network.

This is created in a fashion that builds on understanding what kind of labour solutions work. We have taken the advice of labour who told us that they're very familiar with the provisions in a bill previously known as

PSLRTA and, accordingly, we've adopted them here. On that, I wish to thank you and encourage members to support Bill 36.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I listened with interest to the suggestions made by the Minister of Health, as I always do. One thing that troubles me is the expense of setting up these LHINs. We were discussing it with my colleague the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, who has three community care access centres. We have one in Waterloo. These are public-spirited citizens who work for no money. They are volunteers. They work extremely hard and do an excellent job.

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In Muskoka, they have three community care access centres. Those three boards of directors, who all work as volunteers, for no wages, will be eliminated. They will be replaced by a paid board of directors—one, not three, as I understand it. I understand that each of these directors shall be paid a stipend which is no less than \$60,000. I don't know the size of the new LHIN, but assuming it's 10, we're talking about an increased cost in that locality of some \$500,000 to \$600,000.

I keep looking at the Fraser report. This was a report done some time ago, a couple of years ago. Of all the countries in the world that have publicly funded health care, Canada spent third in the world, only beaten by Iceland and Switzerland, and yet when you look at the number of doctors per capita in Canada, we ranked 19th. Surely that \$600,000 could have been used for hiring more doctors.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'm going to be doing our leadoff this afternoon. I'm going to go back to much of what I focused on in my response to the minister's statement that he made on Thursday. I do that because, as people look at this bill, the question they are going to raise is, "What is this going to do for me in terms of the access I require to the health care system? What do these changes mean for me?"

I said on Thursday, and I'll say it again, because the minister has said the LHINs are supposed to respond to that question that people have about their health care system: What patients are asking, when they look at Ontario's health care system, is, are they getting the health care they need, themselves personally? Are they getting it when they need it, in a timely fashion? Are they getting the health care they need in a timely fashion as close to home as possible? Finally, if they are able to access care in a timely fashion as close to home as possible, is there some continuity around the provision of that care?

I think people who are watching this debate in the general public are concerned about those issues. Talk to them about silos and integration and LHINs and their eyes glaze over, because what they are interested in are these fundamental questions and the government's response to them. Like it or not, government policies, funding for the whole system, the availability of health care providers, the location of health care services, the human resources available to deliver those high quality

services, are part and parcel of a government's response and government direction and government funding.

It is those very singular issues about, "What is this going to do for me?" that people are interested in. They won't see much change as a result of this LHIN legislation.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I am honoured and privileged to stand up this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 36 on local health integration network services. I want to commend the minister, who is doing a wonderful job on behalf of every one of us in this place, and also on behalf of all Ontarians, especially as he represents one of the biggest ministries ever in this province, an almost \$33-billion ministry. It's huge: many employees, many people working everywhere across the province of Ontario.

There are some important things about this bill. To give the local authority some kind of authority and permission to move on their issues, on the local issues, is very important, instead of coming back to Toronto, instead of coming back to the ministry to deal with certain issues.

The important thing is to give local people the right to discuss, to implement and to talk to their people, because the people from the local places know better about their issues and can help their communities. Also, it's important to restore the respect and the dignity of some agencies and communities across the province who are trying to do good for us, trying to help us, to be a part of the health service network instead of consulting on a daily basis with the Ministry of Health in Toronto.

As we mentioned, this ministry is huge. It cannot deal with micromanaging all the issues across this province. I believe it's a very good step in order to manage our spending. As we've been listening to many people in this place, they think by spending more money in health care, we can fix health care. It's not by spending more, but also by managing health care, managing our spending, because one of the pieces of the spending you also have to have is to manage the money you spend. You spend it in the right places and in the right direction. That's what we believe. It's the right bill to manage our money, and I hope it will lead to fixing health care in this province.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm going to be speaking on behalf of our party within minutes with respect to the Minister of Health's statements today as we debate Bill 36.

I think what I've gleaned from the minister's comments is that he's taking an approach which is strictly a financial approach, a transactional approach in terms of what he calls local health system integration. It's sort of like a code word for saying, "We're going to downsize the health care system within each one of these 14 regions of the province to make sure we have better control from the provincial end. We're going to use this mechanism to downsize and, in essence, restrict health care access and opportunities within the local communities."

My area is LHIN number 12, which is North Simcoe-Muskoka. It's a fairly big area, covering all of Simcoe

county and the district of Muskoka. The object of the exercise is basically to find ways to integrate, in the minister's words, the services. Really, what he's looking for is to get rid of any overlap. He wants to make sure that the transactions that are involved in the health care area, whatever the type, whether it's payroll—he mentioned payroll for hospitals, or it could be payroll for other types of health care providers. He wants to see if there is a central group that can provide that so we can save money. No one's against it in terms of dealing with a pure accounting exercise, in terms of saving money, when you're dealing with a non-health-care matter. What worries people is in terms of what he's going to do to restrict health care access.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes our time for questions and comments. The Minister of Health has two minutes to reply.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I want to say to the honourable member from Cambridge that quoting the Fraser Institute isn't a particularly interesting approach, given Mike Harris's involvement there. Maybe you should stand up next time and acknowledge that, as a government, you waited for more than three years to increase the size of medical schools after the NDP reduced them significantly. If you want to look for the daddy of the orphan patients in the province of Ontario, then your caucus room wouldn't be a bad place to start, I say to the honourable member.

He was wrong when he alleged that CCACs will have paid membership for those people who govern them. In fact, we're returning them to the community. This is where they were in about the year 2000, when that member's government took them from the community and insisted that they be related to order-in-council appointments.

I'm hoping that the member from Nickel Belt, at a certain point in this debate, might actually talk about the bill, because so far she's mostly repeating what we know from the NDP, which is that they believe health care can be an endless pot of money in the province of Ontario. She said again in her two-minute statement that she believes there should be an unlimited supply of cash for health care. The interesting thing is her record as a minister, where her ministry was reduced by \$350 million to \$200 million—a strong degree of respect for her power, apparently, not to mention the fact that her government and the Conservative government are the only parties in this Legislature that actually reduced funding to hospitals. Together, they cut hospitals to the tune of about a billion bucks. We haven't done that. We've only increased hospital funding by \$2.35 billion.

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We seek to have a ministry that can rise up and assert itself more appropriately at a strategic level. You're so involved in the day-to-day, I can assure you, that it's hard to get off the issue-management track and spend as much time as we should on helping to create the direction for health care.

I just want to say to the honourable member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford that he's seen the investments

our government is making in his area. He knows there's nothing coming but more resources for health care.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tascona: Mr. Speaker, I understand we have unanimous consent to defer our leadoff until the next sessional day that this bill is debated.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to defer the leadoff speech from the opposition? Agreed.

Mr. Tascona: I'm certainly pleased to join in the debate with respect to Bill 36, which is a very important bill and a huge undertaking on behalf of the Minister of Health in the health care sector. This is no small exercise in terms of the reorganization he's trying to bring about and the amount of money he's dealing with, because we're talking in the billions in the health care budget. It's been delayed significantly because of the fact that replacing the district health councils with local health integration networks is such a major undertaking. There have not only been missed deadlines for the creation of the LHINs; there have been missed deadlines for the creation of the wait times Web site.

There really is no timeline for the implementation of this legislation, and the reason is because it's such a major undertaking. In my words, it's going to be a work in process, not only for the term of this government, which will end at the next election, October 4, 2007, but it will be ongoing. It may be for the next generation in terms of how we work out dealing with the LHINs and how they apply in different areas. I think this is just basically scratching the surface of moving into dealing with health care services.

I'll be the first to admit that, coming from the area that I represent—Barrie, Innisfil and Bradford—there are great challenges with respect to providing the best services you can. The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka knows that, in terms of the constituents he has coming down to Royal Victoria Hospital to receive cancer care treatment, kidney dialysis treatment and other services. In my riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, the people of Barrie and the surrounding areas of Springwater and Essa, and also the northern part of Innisfil, would go to RVH and to Barrie for a lot of their services; whereas people in the southern part of my riding, in Innisfil and Bradford, would go to Southlake Regional Health Centre, which is in Newmarket and which also serves a number of other areas in terms of hospital service, let alone dealing with community care access centres.

I was involved with this process quite extensively, because I sit on the standing committee on government agencies, and the board of directors who make up these LHINs—and there are 14 in the province—are order-in-council appointments, through the Premier, which our committee has an opportunity to review. In fact, we did a number of those and we worked with the Minister of Health to make sure that he got his appointments through so he could get this initial stage of the process going, because they had already discontinued the district health councils. I believe that was March 31, 2005, if I have the date correctly, in anticipation of the LHINs being created

for April 1, 2005. In fact, the deadline was missed and the first LHINs were not created until June 2, 2005. The fact of the matter is, they didn't have any people to sit on them because nobody had been appointed.

What we found from the interviews of the people who were being suggested for appointment by the Liberal government was that they didn't really know what they were supposed to do and what was going to be involved in these LHINs. They had no idea. They were picked to go on to these LHIN boards, and I guess they would learn as they went with respect to how to provide health services within the 14 areas of this province.

This has been a slow start for such an important piece of health care reform, which was a part of the Liberal platform when they were running for election back in 2003. Here we are, almost in 2006, and we really haven't seen any of the LHINs up and operational in terms of what they are going to do, yet we've already discontinued the district health councils; they no longer exist.

As everybody knows, there is going to be significant reduction in community care access centres, which were a major initiative of the Tory government in the 1990s. Community care access centres are also going to be fundamentally restructured in two major ways: The number of community care access centres is going to be reduced from 42 to 14, and the appointments are not going to be by order in council. They're going to be appointed in a different way, which will not be subject to government agencies review, and that's kind of disturbing because it takes away the power of the committee in terms of dealing with appointments.

Everybody knows the fundamental role community care access centres play in a community, not only in terms of referrals to nursing homes but also in terms of providing at-home service for people who need it. I know it's going to affect my area. We have the Simcoe county community care access centre, and there's also one in my friend Norm Miller's riding in Muskoka, which is going to be combined with the Community Care Access Centre Simcoe County, so they will be going from two to one. That's a huge geographical area and certainly a significant population. The challenges they have are going to be significant in terms of how they're going to structure themselves to best serve those areas and move into providing the best care and service we can possibly have. It's a major challenge in terms of people as they age, whether they're aging and have physical problems or whether they have dementia, and the services we need to provide in our area. There's a huge challenge.

We see that we're moving into this particular area, and I think the minister has been up front. He sees this as a sort of transactional approach to dealing with health care. I don't think he really believes that this is to deal with improving access to health care, because that's a separate issue. What we are dealing with is an integration network. If we're talking about the Local Health System Integration Act, "integration" suggests that the system isn't integrated. You're going to have to deal with all those organizations out there that are providing health care services and integrate them to provide the model—

we don't know what that model is because it hasn't really been fully thought through, because as I said, it's a work in process in terms of what will end up being the health network that is going to provide those services.

At the end of the day, it is not going to be the LHINs that make those decisions, financially or from an authority point of view. The power still rests with the Minister of Health with respect to making the final decision, and the power still rests with the Minister of Health with respect to providing the funding that's necessary to provide the health care services within that particular LHIN area.

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What we have here in LHINs is really only an advisory board to the Minister of Health. Their role is to negotiate with service providers and make recommendations to the minister, who has the final and real decisions with respect to what health care services will be provided.

This sort of strikes me: The way the minister characterized it is, "Why would you have five hospitals providing payroll services? They could be combined and they could have one payroll provider." Well, that's a fairly common sense approach. Who's going to object if it's something that can be done that benefits, has a savings and provides proper service? But that's not a health care service; that's strictly an accounting exercise.

The other side of the coin, which we've all been experiencing, whether it's the education sector, is buying groups—you know, bringing them all together so they can get the best price possible by bringing the might of the public sector together, which is something that has happened in the past. These buying groups came together to ensure that they could get the best price for the public sector dollar. That had nothing to do with education in the real direct sense. It was strictly a financial accounting transactional exercise, which made common sense. If you can get together as a buying group and buy the goods cheaper than if you bought them alone, why wouldn't you do that? No one would argue with that.

But what we're dealing with here are real lives and access to health care services that people will need. They should not be part of any accounting exercise. The mechanisms and the health care providers out there—this is not an issue that we're trying to maintain the status quo. What we're trying to do is make sure that the health care services that are being provided are not deteriorated or lessened in any way because of this approach to integrating the health care system within a particular LHIN.

Now, the statement is that we're paying more and getting less through this exercise. Up to \$100 million in costs will be related to community care access centre closures. As I said earlier, there are 42 community care access centres in the province and those will be reduced to 14. There's a leaked Management Board document that speculates \$50 million for severance, \$14 million in legal costs and \$25 million in wage harmonization, and this does not take into account costs associated with

delays. Then there's \$16 million in district health council closure costs, which is \$11 million in severance costs and \$5 million in physical plant costs. So when you look at those two initial moves by the provincial government to get rid of district health councils on March 31, 2005, the monies that were out there were strictly to deal with the shutdown of a particular service and the costs that would relate to the people who were employed by them.

They next move into the exercise of reducing the CCACs, which they haven't done yet, but they will go from 42 to 14 in terms of reducing administrative costs and reducing personnel as they combine, in my area, two organizations into one. As I said earlier, "integration" is probably a code word for downsizing. They're saying, "You're going to get better health care service," but really what they're after here is an accounting exercise in terms of bringing as many organizations that are out there that may be providing similar services into one. I don't really believe that patient access and better access to health care is a part of that equation, because at this point in time I don't think anyone could say that that would be what's going to happen out there.

LHINs will be much more expensive than the district health councils. Estimates show that \$39 million is allocated to run LHINs in 2005-06. The ministry had requested \$52 million for 2005-06 and Management Board would only approve part of the request. LHINs will have 560 employees to operate three times what the DHCs had. So here we have these organizations that are being set up. Certainly they're going to have to be staffed properly, because really their job is to basically sift through all the other health care service providers out there in the area. What really is counterintuitive is that you're creating a layer of bureaucracy that is going to be bulked up and much more expensive to run than the DHCs. They will have no more power than the district health councils in terms of financial clout and decision-making clout, yet they are being bulked up, and obviously the money that goes to the LHINs will take money out of the health care services that need to be provided in the areas, because the LHINs are basically going to be the coordinator.

It is just another situation in the school board sense. You have the schools out there providing the education to the young students at the same time as you've got the board out there, with their heavy bureaucracy and everything, sitting back and taking resources away from the schools because they need to bulk up in terms of planning how they are going to deliver services. I get the sense that we're into the same type of exercise that has failed us with respect to education in terms of making sure that the resources get out to the schools as opposed to staying at the school board.

The other part of it is, what do we get? We get a high-priced advisory panel with no teeth and not a penny spent on patient care. Quite frankly, that's what is going to happen here, because this is a model designed to set up these LHINs, which are going to basically be the sifting organization to see where they can remove organizations providing health care services and get that stamp of

approval from the provincial government through the Minister of Health. If they don't do what the Minister of Health wants, the minister has the power to restrict funding with respect to the LHINs and the services that will be in that area.

So initially the Minister of Health is taking away the pressure for the decisions that will be made in a local area. The minister can stand back and say, "That's the decision they made; that was in their best interest." Meanwhile, he has the club over them in terms of, if they don't co-operate, he's not going to provide the funding and he'll probably take away some of their decision-making powers.

In terms of this exercise, the McGuinty government claims that the development of LHINs is to better plan, coordinate and fund the delivery of health care services at the local level. Under this legislation, the Liberals will download approximately \$21 billion worth of spending authority from the Minister of Health to the LHINs. The claim that LHINs are bringing health planning closer to the community is belied by the fact that some of the LHINs are so large as to, in the case of the central east LHIN, stretch from Victoria Park Avenue to Algonquin Park.

The creation of the LHINs is really the creation of a new layer of bureaucracy, in which there is anywhere from \$39 million to \$55 million that we spend on bureaucrats rather than front-line patient care, which is my argument that you are taking money from patient care and putting it into this bureaucracy that is basically an organization to find savings for the minister within a particular area, not necessarily to find better health care and access within an area.

As part of the plan to create the LHINs, the government will be consolidating the number of community care access centre corporations in the province from 42 to 14. As I said earlier, the consolidation costs are more likely to be closer to \$100 million in doing this basic downsizing exercise with respect to CCACs, because that's basically what it is; there is no other way to look at it.

The geographic boundaries that I said are out there cross over current municipal regions and political boundaries. In my area, North Simcoe-Muskoka, which is number 12, the combination of Muskoka and Simcoe county is obviously—I don't argue that it is not a good fit in terms of the fact that they border on each other, but it is a pretty large area. You've got a mix of city, a mix of rural and a mix of an area that's moving into the north—I know the member is our northern member—combined with the city of Barrie at its southern limit.

I could tell you that this exercise is a work in progress, and it's difficult to understand where the end-game is going to be with respect to making sure we know what services are going to be provided.

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To be fair, I certainly have worked hard to bring in the best health care services that we can in Barrie, Innisfil and Bradford in terms of cancer care treatment at both

RVH and Southlake, improving services for children at the children's health centre that's going to be operational—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. I apologize. Questions and comments?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Your time was up. Thank you very much for your comments.

The member for Nickel Belt.

Ms. Martel: In response to the comments made by the member from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, two points, because he talked about being on the government agencies committee and being in a position of having to deal with some of the appointments that came later than they should have.

What's interesting about the legislation is that at the end of the day those individuals who serve on the LHINs are accountable back to the government, not to the communities they serve, because they are not going to be elected by their communities; they are going to be put in place by the government through orders in council. I asked the ministry staff about this during the briefing I had on the LHINs and was told this was another measure of an accountability mechanism. As the talk is about these folks being responsive to the community, why is it then that they aren't, at the end of the day, responsive to the community? They do the bidding of the minister. That's who does the appointments. That's whom they're accountable to at the end of the day.

Compare that to the change that the government says it's finally going to bring through with respect to the community care access centres. When the previous government brought in Bill 130, both opposition parties opposed that legislation. We were very concerned that the government of the day, at that time the Conservative government, was essentially taking over those community care access centres, was appointing the executive director, was appointing the board members; changes with respect to meetings so that those were not public any more.

It appears that the government is going to bring back a model of local control and local accountability for CCACs. I wonder why that same model doesn't apply to the LHINs. If these are the folks who are supposed to be making major decisions about major health money, whom are they really accountable to? I don't see that it's the local community, because there's no mechanism for them to be accountable back to the local community with respect to any kind of election or a process of nomination at the local level.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I'm pleased to speak in support of this Bill 36. One of the biggest concerns I heard for many, many years around health care was that there seemed to be this huge monolith down in Toronto, this big monolith that was trying to micromanage and dictate things that were happening in very diverse and far-flung regions of this province, and that there was always the frustration at the local level of trying to make Toronto, this monolith, understand the

needs. What the LHINs proposal does very effectively is that it takes that monolith, breaks it down, breaks it apart and spreads it around the province.

I can speak about my own LHIN. The headquarters is going to be located in Grimsby. We had an announcement. The chair is a tremendously passionate, grass-roots advocate for health care and home care. She has a team working with her so far that includes a nurse, that includes a health care administrator—a lot of experience being brought to the table. These are people who live in those communities. They are people who work in those communities, who are naturally more sensitive and able to make the decisions around the needs that are there. When you live and work in a community, you are automatically, just by nature of that, more accountable to the people you live and work with.

People talk about politics, that when you get further up to federal, there is less of a sensitive touch or responsiveness to local needs. I was president of my ratepayers' association, and nothing is more political, and you're not held more accountable, than when you're dealing with your neighbours. That's why these local people, who are experienced in these areas, working, living in those communities regularly, are really the best people to be helping us make the right investments and the right decisions with regard to health care.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford. This bill does concern me, because last Friday I had the privilege of meeting with Marion Saunders and Brian Lemon with Lakeridge Health. The expert panel report just committed that this is an independent—John Reid and Sister Elizabeth Davis and Ruth Robinson—they said that they cannot balance their budget, a \$14-million operational budget deficit, without cutting patient services.

Right after that meeting, we went to meet with Durham Access to Care's Janet Harris and Howard Hall. They said there was really virtually no savings. I wouldn't want to misrepresent in any way what they said, but my impression is that there's no real savings.

What I see here is an attempt by the government to off-load, as has been said, around \$20 billion in direct funding to the hospitals, and they're going to make them even more remote. Instead of having the district health councils that we have today, which they've abandoned, as well as the local voice which would be the volunteer boards on our hospitals—when you put Bill 8, which was the funding model, the balanced budget legislation from the ministry, as well as the LHINs, together with the Bill 36 legislation, the one we're debating today, these boards will be rendered completely redundant, in my view. The LHINs will give them the money. If there's a question in the House about a program that's been cut, a patient service that's been cut, they're going to say, "We can't interfere with the operation of the LHINs; they're at arm's-length of government"—no accountability. It's going to be harder to get to this level of bureaucracy.

The LHIN in our area, the central east LHIN, actually stretches from Queen's Park to Algonquin Park. It's

unreasonably large and inaccessible to provide what is the most important service in the province of Ontario, indeed in the country: its health care services—both in your community, in your home and in your hospitals.

I think this is a very bad piece of prescriptive Liberal legislation that will do nothing to solve the issues of—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'm interested to have the opportunity to comment on several of those that were made. It's interesting that the member from Durham just spoke plainly against the facts. The facts are very, very clear that the circumstances we inherited in Ontario were not producing an equitable result for Ontarians. So those who speak against this bill are wrapping their arms around the status quo, but the status quo they're wrapping their arms around was producing an unequal result. Do you want to use the words "public health care system"? I think the principle that the same services are delivered by community care access centres no matter where an Ontarian happens to live is an important principle, and that's one that's being advanced here.

It's interesting that the member from Nickel Belt is in this blank cheque mode. This is the NDP starting and end point. It's the one that gets you into the \$12-billion and \$14-billion deficit world. And it's the one that suggests that you just ought to have a blank cheque out there because the work that you're doing is so important, without any regard for the reality. This is the NDP problem: no regard for reality. Because they're the ones that operate—different when they were in government, when they cut everything. They cut drug funding, they cut hospital funding and they cut public health funding. But when they're in opposition, they revert to their instinct, which is that health care can be a place where unlimited amounts of money are required and should be obtained.

It was interesting that Leah Casselman takes a different approach. It's odd that these two groups are on a different track. She said that this is about the province ducking accountability. The reality is neither of those. It's a bit of a new paradigm, if I could use that word, that I think folks need to get their heads around a bit. We're all in this together: government, health care providers. We're not going to agree on every point every single day, but the simple premise at the heart of this is, let's end the shenanigans, where we pretend that it's always up to somebody else, and let's recognize that we're all in it together.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? Oh, I apologize. The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford does have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Tascona: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say thanks for the comments made by the members from Nickel Belt, Stoney Creek and Durham, and by the Minister of Health.

Certainly, we're in it together. I agree with the Minister of Health, but as I said before, I don't know where we're going. I think that just because we speak about the bill doesn't mean we support the status quo. Obviously,

everybody here knows that the minister has taken some time in attempting to get to the point where he's got a framework here. That's really a challenge in itself.

1650

The member from Durham's position is pretty clear: He thought that the LHINs were going to be a bureaucracy buffer for the Minister of Health. The member from Stoney Creek doesn't necessarily agree with that, but the member from Nickel Belt looks at the appointment process: The appointment process to the LHINS is orders in council, which are through the Premier, and the accountability is to the minister. That's about as direct as you possibly could be, because their appointments depend on the minister, and their reappointment will depend on the minister in that particular area.

I still go back to the point that—I know what we are trying to do here, but when you speak of integration, you're talking about downsizing and you're talking about an accounting exercise here, which is a lot of what this is about. I don't think anyone is disputing that, and I think the minister has been fairly frank about that. But when he talks about a new paradigm, I don't know where we're going here, because the fact of the matter is that nobody does. It has taken quite a while. I don't even know whether we'll really be starting up on where we're going before the end of this particular term, because this is, as I said, a major undertaking. Hopefully, we're going to get this challenge right because we're all in it together.

The Acting Speaker: Now, further debate? The member for Nickel Belt.

Ms. Martel: It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate this afternoon. I will be doing the leadoff for our party, so I will probably take this close to 6 o'clock.

I want to begin by starting where I was on Thursday, because that's where most Ontarians' heads are at as they look at the health care system, and they're going to look at it even more during the next number of weeks as we enter into a federal campaign, where I'm going to assume health care will be a topic of consideration and where politicians will be making promises about the same.

As I look at what people are thinking about health care, I can tell you that top of the mind is not LHINs—most people wouldn't even know what that acronym is; top of the mind is not silos and getting across them or breaking them down; and top of the mind is not integration or consolidation—except in some specific cases that I'm going to raise in northern Ontario—because I can tell you that when people hear about consolidation of service, to them, that translates to mean they're going to travel longer to get the health care services that they need.

When people hear this debate that we're having, frankly, I think their eyes glaze over. I don't think they're terribly interested, because I don't think they believe that this is going to impact them positively one way or the other. The fact of the matter is, I think they're absolutely right.

You see, I think the people are concerned about a couple of very basic, key issues with respect to health care. I focus on these because the minister has said on

more than one occasion that this LHIN legislation, this idea of having more decision-making in the community, is supposed to respond to what people want with respect to health care. Well, what people want with respect to health care are the following:

(1) They want the health care that they need as Ontarians, whatever that health care service may be.

(2) They want health care—that service—when they need it. They want it delivered in a timely fashion.

(3) They want the health care service that they need when they need it, and they want that to be delivered as close to home as possible, because when you're ill, you don't want to have to be travelling several hundred kilometres to access health care services.

(4) Finally, if they can get through all that, they want to be assured by somebody that there's going to be continuity in the care that's delivered to them and that there are not going to be disruptions in service.

Those are the things that I think people who are watching this debate, and people out there who are hearing something about LHINs, are really concerned about. At the end of the day, do I think that this legislation before us is going to do much to improve those four things that people need? No, I do not. I do not, because at the end of the day, regardless of what the minister might say and what Liberals are going to say when they get up, responding to people's needs with respect to health care is a function of a couple of things: first, the overall pool of money that is available for health care in this jurisdiction, which really determines what services are available and what services are not; second, the ability to have those human resources, those health care providers, actually deliver the services that people need; and third, government policies, because if there is anything that determines people's health care these days, it is the government's policies related to the provision of those services.

The LHINs are not responsible for government policy. They will not be recommending changes, they will not be responsible for making changes; they will be implementing whatever the government policy of the day is.

Secondly, the LHINs will deal with whatever budget this minister or this government decides to give them. They're not going to have some new pool of funding that they can make unilateral decisions about with respect to services being provided; they're going to deal within the envelope they are given, and that's going to be decided by this government.

That's really what people need to know: that what they need, what they want, getting it in a timely fashion, getting it as close to home as possible is a function that is totally reliant on how much money is available in any given year for health care services, and the government policies that direct the provision of those services. The LHINs aren't going to be able to do anything about those two things—nothing at all—because they are beholden to the government both for the policies they have to implement and for the funding that will be transferred to

them to deliver services at the local level. Those are the facts.

Let me deal with the health care they need. There are many Ontarians today who would argue that the health care service they need is access to chiropractic treatment or access to eye exams or access to physiotherapy clinics. Those are the things they really need; those are the things that will maintain them. Well, this is a government that cut access to those services in its first budget. They did that after, in the same budget, bringing in a new health care tax which they promised they wouldn't. They're now taking about \$2.4 billion out of people's pockets and, at the same time, in the same budget, they made cuts to important health care services that people had access to and wanted to continue to have access to, but too many can't afford them.

I've got to tell you, there is nothing in the LHIN legislation, nothing about these boards, nothing about consolidation or anything else that's going to change that. The fact of the matter is, this government made a policy decision in last year's budget to cut access to these essential health care services and there isn't any LHIN in Ontario that's going to bring those services back to the people who need them. That is a function of government policy in determining who gets access to services and it's also a function of how much money is available in the pool to provide services.

Secondly, we had cancer patients here about 10 days ago who clearly need access to life-saving chemotherapy drugs that have already been approved by Health Canada but still remain under review here in Ontario. Those cancer patients who have run out of other options with respect to other life-saving chemotherapy drugs are being told by their oncologists that they need access to Velcade or Erbitux, for example. We had people in the gallery—and I raise their case here again today because there is nothing in the LHIN legislation that's going to respond to that, that's going to fix that, that's going to deal with that, that's going to make sure that those patients who need access to life-saving chemotherapy drugs can get access to them. That's a policy decision that will be made by the government of the day. That decision has yet to be made, and these patients wait.

1700

Someone like Jim Leslie, if he were here today, would be arguing that the health care he needs is access to life-saving chemotherapy drugs, particularly Erbitux. He was diagnosed with cancer in 2002. He has had a number of surgeries, a number of chemotherapy treatments. Regrettably, his cancer returns in different places in his body. It's now found in his ribs. His oncologist at Sunnybrook has said to him that the only thing left for him to try, the only thing that might work, is Erbitux, which has been approved by Health Canada but is still under review in this province.

So Jim Leslie, a Toronto police officer who has been on leave from the service since 2002, and his wife are going to the States. They're going to have to purchase Erbitux in the United States, and they're going to have to

pay for treatment in the US. Some of his colleagues on the Toronto police force have held a number of fundraisers to raise money for him to do that, because it costs \$15,000 a month for him to undergo the treatment, and he's going to need six months of treatment.

That's a really expensive proposition for Jim Leslie, who needs access to this life-saving drug. He needs access and can't get it because we don't have a system in place in this province whereby you can get an exemption under special circumstances—under life-saving circumstances—and actually get access to a drug that has been approved by Health Canada but still hasn't been approved through the drug review process here in Ontario.

If Jim Leslie were here, he'd say to me, "I don't know much about the LHINs, but I can tell you that I sure need this government to change its policy with respect to my getting access to cancer treatment drugs. I need this government to do something pretty dramatic pretty soon so that I can get coverage for Erbitux and don't have to bankrupt my family in order to do it."

He's not the only one. Just after we raised his case, we got a call and then a letter from a physician out of Ottawa, and Dr. McPhail has said we can use his comments. I just want to raise them here:

"As I write this, I'm a 68-year-old retired vascular surgeon with 35 years of experience as a medical practitioner and I am dying of cancer." This particular gentleman, Dr. McPhail, has multiple myeloma and requires Velcade, which again has been approved by the federal government but has not been approved here in Ontario.

In his letter, where he writes of his experience as a patient, he talks about finding out about his cancer in October 2002. He talks about his transfer to Princess Margaret, the additional treatment that was done, the bone marrow transplant that was done in 2003, the fact that he went into remission, but then, by Christmas 2003, the myeloma was back.

The first relapse began. He was back to Princess Margaret, involved in a randomized trial of an experimental drug in April 2004. He had to go between Toronto and Ottawa several times a month for that treatment. He recovered a little bit, but by fall 2005, the medication was starting to lose its effectiveness. He was discharged by Princess Margaret and is back in Ottawa for further treatment. He has been effectively told by the folks in Ottawa that he needs Velcade and that he needs it now. If he doesn't get it, he will not have longer than six months to live.

I just want to quote this: "I am fortunate. I have savings to deplete, a home I can remortgage, but there are many Canadians who do not have these options. As a cancer patient facing the end of my life, and as a physician with a full grasp of the clinical knowledge of what awaits in the months ahead, I have to ask, if Health Canada has approved Velcade, then why is the Ontario government refusing to fund it? ...

"Personally, I've devoted my entire working life to trying to make our public system work, but that public system is now utterly failing me and others facing the

grim reality of cancer when we need it so badly. It is outrageous to force cancer patients to draw down their retirement savings in order to purchase essential drugs. My wife of 46 years will ultimately have to depend on what remains of these funds. And what of those patients who do not have the choice, those who lack adequate savings, who do not own a home, those whose life is literally more than they can afford? Cancer patients do not have the luxury of time to wait while another pre-election debate rages, while there remains no adequate pharmacare in place, and a \$42-billion agreement signed a year ago between the Prime Minister and the provincial Premiers to 'fix' health care is not producing meaningful results, not at least for people like me."

I've got to tell you, neither will the LHINs produce the meaningful results that Dr. McPhail needs, or Jim Leslie or any number of cancer patients who were here last week. LHINs won't change this situation, because at the end of the day, it's government policy that is going to make the decision about who gets access to these services, not the LHINs.

Let me give you another example. There are many in Ontario who would like to use home care but can't because of the restrictions that were put in place under the former government that regrettably remain in place even though the Liberals promised in the last election to get rid of these restrictions to home care. There are two that I want to focus on, and I focused on these in health estimates as well.

Under the Conservatives, two changes were made to regulations for home care. One, a person is eligible to receive homemaking services if—and this is section 2 under regulation 386/99—"a) the person requires personal support services along with the homemaking services."

What it means is a restriction on who is eligible to receive home care even when they need it. That restriction is that unless you can prove to the CCAC that you have a personal care need—that you need someone to come in and bathe you, for example—you are not eligible to receive homemaking services: help with laundry, help with cleaning, help with your dishes and help with your groceries. You can't receive any of that help, even if it would maintain you in your own home and allow you to live independently in your own home for a longer time, because one of the changes made by the Conservatives, and kept in place by the Liberals, was that you had to have a personal care need in order to qualify for both. That makes no sense.

The second restriction that was imposed by the Conservatives and remains in place under the Liberals is a maximum number of hours of homemaking and personal support services that you can receive. Under that same regulation, there is a restriction on the number of hours of homemaking that you can receive in a given 30-day period: 80 hours in the first 30 days that follow the first date of service; 60 hours in a subsequent 30-day period. For families, for example, that have special-needs children, who have a high level of care, that are trying to

keep those children at home, this restriction on home care fails them entirely, but it is a restriction that remains in place. It hasn't been changed by the Liberal government despite election promises to do so.

The end result, I can tell you, in our community when the changes were brought into effect was that hundreds and hundreds of primarily seniors—some disabled individuals—who were receiving home care services were arbitrarily cut off. Some of them could afford to pay privately to access the services; many could not. The upshot was that in our community, people who otherwise would have been able to live independently if they could have received the home care services they needed in the hours they needed them were forced into long-term-care homes prematurely because they couldn't pay for the services they really needed. That makes no sense.

Part of the debate here is talking about doing things more effectively. Looking for those changes, I have to tell you, the government could save a whole lot of cash if they just rescinded these two regulatory changes, and they don't need LHINs to do it. If this government actually lived up to the election promises it made to rescind these two regulations and provided homemaking services and home care services to seniors and the disabled when they needed them for as long as they needed them, they could save a very significant amount of money by forgoing the costs associated with those people having to move into long-term-care homes because they can't get what they need in their own homes and remain there and live independently.

I've raised this in the estimates committee. I've asked the government when they're going to make these changes. The changes still haven't been made. You don't need LHINs to make those changes. In fact, LHINs can't make those changes. If the government wanted to have some savings, wanted to keep people in their own homes longer, wanted to ensure that they remained in their own homes with some dignity, all they'd have to do is make those two changes, and home care providers would be able to support so many more seniors, so many more people who are disabled in their own homes, for so much longer and forgo the very expensive costs of long-term-care facilities. But those changes haven't been made, and those changes, which are required in policy, aren't going to be made under the LHINs. For those many people who contact my office to say that they can't get the home care they need for as long as they need it, LHINs aren't going to make one bit of difference in terms of their getting the health care services they really need.

Let me deal with the second point: people getting the health care they need when they need it. I said last week, and I'll say again here, that the ability of Ontario residents to get the health care services they need when they need them really is a function of a couple of things: first, availability of health care providers in the system itself, their sheer numbers, the human resources required to actually deliver the front-line services. Secondly, it's a function, for example, of the availability of operating times in hospitals. It's also a question of the availability

of hospital beds, long-term-care beds and community services. It's the availability of all these things that make the difference between someone getting care when they need it and someone waiting for that care—and waiting a long time for that care.

1710

There's nothing in the LHIN legislation that is going to do anything to change that, because there's nothing in the LHIN legislation that speaks to what needs to be happening with respect to human resources personnel; there's nothing that deals with effective operating time in our hospitals; there's nothing that deals with more long-term-care beds or more community-based services. It's a function, again, of this government, its policies and the funding available for the system. Nothing in the LHIN legislation is going to change that, and yet in my community that's a really serious concern. Let me deal, for example, with what has been happening for well over a year now for people in our community who are in the hospital system because there is no bed available for them in the community, either in a long-term-care home or, frankly, no treatment or bed available for them in an addiction agency.

Well over a year ago, the Ministry of Health in our community had to put in place what is called a crisis one designation. This means that in our community someone who needs a bed in a long-term-care home has to go to the first available bed in the community, regardless of whether or not it's their first choice. What it also means is that if there is no available bed in the immediate community, that is, the city of Greater Sudbury, those patients who don't need to be in the hospital any more but who are waiting for a long-term-care bed can now be sent to Espanola or Manitoulin Island, and in about the last three weeks a decision was made to now send those patients, if they have to, to a long-term-care home in Parry Sound.

The family members I have talked to about this—there have been two in the last two days who have specifically called me about concerns because their parents are facing this issue right now. This is hardly health care when their parents need it. Their parents need to be able to move out of the hospital because the hospital is not the place for their needs to be met. They need to be able to move into the community, and they can't do that. There has been no long-term, comprehensive strategy to deal with this crisis, and it has been an ongoing crisis for a year. It's been a very public crisis for well over a year.

Last October, Pioneer Manor, which is a municipally run long-term-care home, in the face of this crisis and in the face of it becoming public went to the ministry and said, "We have space for 30 alternative level of care beds in our home. Can you make funding available for 30 alternative level of care beds? That will ease some of the pressure in the hospital, of those patients who are in the hospital and can't get out because they don't have a place to go." The ministry responded by funding 10 of those beds, even though the need was clear, it was for 30, and even though they had done more beds in Timmins and

even though it was very clear that those 10 beds were going to be filled up pretty quickly and that we were going to have an ongoing crisis. That's exactly what happened. The ministry funded 10 beds and the crisis hasn't gone away.

The crisis exploded in the media this summer and exploded in the media again in the last couple of weeks, because what's also happening is that many patients who are coming in for operations, those who live in the city and those who live outside of the city, are having their operations cancelled because there are no beds for them to go to when the surgery is complete.

Now we have the scenario that city council, in an emergency vote this week, is now trying to arrange a meeting with the Minister of Health to discuss what they are calling a crisis in long-term-care homes in the city. This comes on the decision that was made public a couple of weeks ago to now send long-term-care patients to Parry Sound if there was not a space available for them in our city. The city's delegation is supposed to consist of the mayor, David Courtemanche, and councillors Ron Bradley and Ron Dupuis. From Councillor Callaghan, who represents seniors' issues at council: "It's almost reached the absurd now," said Callaghan. "They're shipping people from Sudbury to somewhere else while they ship people from other places back into Sudbury. One of the goals of hospital restructuring in the province is to ensure that long-term-care resources would be improved, but I think it can be said this has not been the case."

We have a serious problem in our community. We've got any number of patients who for reasons beyond their control are going to be asked, and have been asked, and have been going to Manitoulin or Espanola and now Parry Sound for care in a long-term-care home. This is not service when they need it.

We have other people in the hospital who need addiction treatment, who need access to services in the community to deal with their addiction. There are not enough services in the community for that and there hasn't been an increase, except for a rate-of-inflation increase, in those services for far too long.

When you ask those families, "What do you need and when do you need it?" they say, "We need it now." But our ability to access the health care we need is directly related to a lack of available long-term-care beds, a lack of available addiction support services, and there is nothing in the LHIN legislation that's going to respond to that. They've got no authority to respond to that, no mechanism to respond to that. It is clearly a function of government policy, and this government has got to get its head around this matter and bring in some policy that's finally going to respond to this ongoing crisis in the community.

Let me give you another example. I raised it on Thursday and it's appropriate to raise it again. I said that people's ability to get the health care they need when they need it is also very much a function of the availability of the health care providers in the system. We

had some examples last week—very public again—of crises happening in emergency departments right across the province. On Monday, November 21, the media made it very clear that a group of emergency room physicians was in the process of filing a complaint with Ontario's Ombudsman, Mr. Marin, that the government of Ontario is not living up to its responsibility to provide timely access to emergency care; namely, personnel and beds.

Dr. Brockway, a physician who works mostly in Woodstock but also at a number of other hospitals in southern Ontario, said the following in the *Globe and Mail*: "The government is failing the people of Ontario by not providing timely access to emerg. care," Andy Brockway said yesterday, "and what we want the Ombudsman to do is to make the government live up to its responsibility."

The article cited four cases cited by Dr. Brockway in the last two months. Of two patients who came to emerg., one went home and died later that evening, and one was told that he was going to need surgery in a teaching hospital, but the hospital had no beds and the patient was sent home. Four days later he returned to emerg. and died.

There were two other cases where individuals came to the emergency department. One was very ill, too ill to be sent home. She did go home and came back in the morning, suffered a heart attack on the operating table, and is alive but on life support. A fourth arrived at emergency with chest pains. He came because he knew there was something wrong but could not be seen in a timely fashion and so has suffered more damage than he should have if access to life-saving care had been available when he needed it in that emergency room.

These are the four cases that I assume have already been provided to Mr. Marin.

The point that needs to be made is that the legislation that we're debating here today isn't going to do a thing for the five million Ontarians who access emergency rooms every year in Ontario. It's not going to do a thing. It's not going to change their ability to access life-saving care in the emergency department by one iota, because that is very much a function of government policies regarding emergency care and overall funding for the system.

It's interesting that Dr. Alan Drummond, who is the chair of public affairs for the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, on November 24 put a letter to the editor of the *Toronto Sun* and made it very clear himself, saying, "Make no mistake about it, the solution to ER overcrowding is purely political. The Ontario provincial government has the opportunity and the expertise to address ER overcrowding and solve it. They apparently have chosen not to do so...."

"The Ontario Liberal government promised in its election platform to introduce 1,500 new acute care beds to restore system capacity. They have yet to do so.

"The Ontario government, within the framework of the national wait times reduction strategy, has had the opportunity to place a priority on the issue of ER wait times but has chosen not to do so.

"The Ontario government commissioned a study to address the issue of ambulance offloading in the GTA, which is another effect from ER overcrowding. Even though that study was completed in March, it is now November and the report has yet to be released; another questionable political decision."

1720

I raise this because, for those five million Ontarians who access emergency departments across the province every year, timely access to care is pretty critical. Frankly, timely access to life-saving care is urgent for them. ER wait times are not one of the five priorities of this government. If you look at the wait time strategy, the waits in emergency departments across this province aren't mentioned. They're not a priority. The government is not focusing on them. The government is not making significant changes to deal with them. I think that's clear both from what has been said by the emergency room physicians and the fact that they felt compelled to even lodge a complaint with Ontario's Ombudsman about Ontario's failure to provide timely care.

Is that going to change with this bill? Is there anything the LHINs can do about this particular situation? Regrettably, the answer is no. The answer is no: The LHINs aren't going to be able to do anything about what is going on in emergency departments. That's a function and a responsibility and a decision that has to be made by this government. Whether it's a decision about adding more beds to the system, like they promised in the last election campaign, 1,500 new acute care beds; whether it's a decision to add wait times in emergencies to the government's wait time strategy, which so far has not been done—the LHINs have absolutely no control over those issues. It's not their responsibility. They have no mechanism to deal with it. They have no decision-making authority to deal with it. It goes back to the government of the day.

For those folks who are waiting in emergency rooms, sometimes waiting for life-saving care and not getting it, the fact that we're dealing with this bill today isn't going to change their experience in the ER one bit. It's not going to make one bit of difference to their wait, to the wait of family members or to the wait of those five million other Ontarians who need to access and who do access care in emergency rooms across our province every day.

Let me deal with the third point that I raised: Patients want to get their health care as close to home as possible. Getting health care as close to home as possible really is a function of having the human resources available to give the care when that care is needed. Folks who are trying to get that care as close to home as possible really have to rely on whether or not there are the broad range of health care providers in the system as close to home as possible to provide them with the care that they need when they need it. Here again, the LHINs will have no opportunity, no ability to make any changes with regard to human resources personnel. Those are decisions that the ministry will continue to be responsible for making.

For those patients in my community, for example, who get discharged from hospital and who require physiotherapy care through the home care system and can't get it, there isn't anything that the LHINs are going to be able to do about that. That's a function of a shortage of physiotherapists in our part of the world. That's reinforced in Timmins; it's reinforced in Kapuskasing; it's reinforced across northwestern Ontario. The ability of those folks to get the health care they need as close to home as possible is a function of whether or not the health care providers are available. In that example in our community, physiotherapists, who people need after they have hip operations—there isn't anything the LHIN is going to be able to do about that. It's not going to change that one bit.

Secondly, let's deal with nursing services, because nurses in this province are on the front lines in our hospitals, they're on the front lines in our long-term-care homes, they're on the front lines in public health. They are an essential component of the health care system. Nurses have made it very clear that there is a shortage. They've called on this government to live up to the commitment that this government made in the last election when it promised 8,000 new, additional nurses during the course of its mandate.

I want to quote again some comments that were made by Linda Haslam-Stroud, who was at Queen's Park for a press conference on November 16. It was a press conference that focused on a report that was released by the Ontario Federation of Labour looking at health care providers in the province: the stresses they were under, the shortages they were facing, the concerns they had as professionals with respect to the kind of care they could provide to their patients. Let me just quote some of her speech she read into the record that morning, because it's very clear that this idea of needing more nurses is not one that's going to be able to be resolved by LHINs anywhere in the province. It is entirely up to this government whether or not they live up to the election promise they made, and it will then determine whether or not we have those nurses in those front-line places to actually provide the care they do want to provide.

Let me look at what Ms. Stroud, president of the Ontario Nurses' Association, had to say.

"I want to speak today about the impact of not enough nurses on patient care, on the health and safety of nurses who provide that care and on keeping our nurses in the profession.

"Every day nurses in Ontario face difficult conditions in their workplace: too few qualified front-line staff caring for sicker patients, with fewer resources. This is happening in our hospitals, in our nursing homes and in the community....

"We all know that the current government came to power in this province promising to hire 8,000 new nurses.

"While the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has made a series of one-time funding announcements for nurses, and the government says it has hired more nurses,

our nurses have not seen any significant improvements on the front lines in our workplaces.

"Neither the patients nor the nurses in nursing homes, emergency rooms, home care and public health units have seen more nurses to help them with excessive workloads.

"The government says it has created more than 3,000 full-time nursing positions. But a closer look reveals that 1,000 of these are three-month temporary contract positions in hospitals too few nurses and poor working conditions are burning out our profession and putting quality patient care in jeopardy.

"We as nurses cannot triage or reassess patients in the emergency department in accordance with the standards and more importantly in accordance with our patients' needs.

"We do not have enough staff to appropriately plan our patients' discharges so that they receive the follow-up in the community that they require and deserve.

"Public health nurses are striving each and every day to provide preventive care to the community. This includes our preparation for the upcoming flu pandemic. Our nurses tell me that they are not even able to provide minimal care for mandatory programs in public health, never mind trying to be proactive in assisting with prevention of disease.

"Our long-term-care nurses are left trying to coordinate and plan care for over 100 residents at a time....

"Ontario's lack of nurses not only means stressed-out, burned-out nurses, it means that when Ontarians need quality care, it is being compromised.

"In a province like Ontario, it's a disgrace that the nurse-to-patient ratio has fallen to the second lowest in the entire country."

I raise those comments because, as I said earlier, people's ability to get care as close to home as possible really is directly related to those health care professionals who are available in place to provide it. The president of ONA just 10 short days ago made it really clear that nurses in this province have not seen a change in their workplaces and don't feel they are in a position to provide the quality care they want to. They are very concerned about what's happening in all the workplaces where they provide care, and they are very concerned that they haven't seen, and neither have their patients, an increase in those health care professionals, those other nurses, who are desperately needed to provide care.

Is the bill we are dealing with today going to change any of that? Is it going to allow the LHINs to make more nurses available in our long-term-care homes, in public health, on the front lines in the hospital system? No, the bill will not do that at all. It goes back to the government to make those decisions, to see that those kinds of things happen. The LHINs have no say, no ability, no mechanism to do any of that.

1730

Let me deal with long-term care, because also last week the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors was here. They were joined by a

number of seniors' groups at the press conference, including Canadian Pensioners Concerned, Concerned Friends of Ontario Citizens in Care Facilities, the Ontario Association of Residents' Councils, Ontario Society of Senior Citizens' Organizations, and United Senior Citizens of Ontario. They were here because they made it very clear that despite the funding announcements that have been made by the government, the actual increase to base budgets of long-term-care homes, which would allow them to increase staff and subsequently enhance care to the residents whom they are trying to serve—the actual amount of money that's gone into the base budgets—is far less than what the government has announced: about \$144 million versus an announcement that was over \$400 million.

They came to make that very public because they are very concerned that those residents whom they are trying to look after can't get care that they need when they need it and as close to home as possible, because there just aren't the staff in long-term-care homes to allow that to happen. Their staffing levels are directly related to the amount of money this government provides for them to be able to enhance patient care.

Donna Rubin, who is the executive director, made it very clear that as a result of the difference between what the government has announced for long-term care and what has actually gone into base budgets to allow for an increase in staff, residents are falling further and further behind. She said,

"Residents now receive just over two hours of nursing and personal care over a 24-hour period. OANHSS believes that this level is unacceptable and should be closer to at least three hours;

"More personal support workers are needed. Currently, these front-line staff each care for about 10 residents, and they are stretched to the limit trying to meet residents' basic needs;

"Homes are not able to provide anywhere near the level of rehabilitation and restorative care that residents need"; and finally,

"Only a small fraction of residents currently receive professional mental health services, even though 65% have Alzheimer disease or some other form of dementia."

Is the bill that we're dealing with today, the bill that's before this Legislature, going to change any of that? No, it's not, because the LHINs have no responsibility in this regard. The LHINs have no ability to ensure that the funding that was promised by the government actually gets to long-term-care homes so that they can hire the staff that they need to enhance the quality of care for residents. It's not in their mandate; it's not within their ability. So those folks in long-term-care homes who really were looking forward to increased care as a result of increased staffing aren't going to see any of those changes when the LHINs go into effect. That's directly related back to government policies about who's going to get money and how much money is actually going to be flowed. Make no mistake about it.

In my neck of the woods, those folks who want care as close to home as possible are particularly concerned

about the size of the LHINs. In our LHIN geographic area, there are at least four major regional hospitals and then there's a smaller community hospital in Parry Sound, so five hospitals in the geographic LHIN area that we're already dealing with. People's ability to get health care as close to home as possible really is a function of where those resources are allocated for that care. That's the same whether you're talking about a cancer treatment centre, whether you're talking about dialysis, whether you're talking about long-term care etc. Most people, I think, when they are ill, want to be as close to that support network as they can, and many times that's in the community where they're from.

When patients in our part of the world hear terms like "consolidation" or "integration" and they hear that LHINs are going to be given the authority to integrate programs and services, and then they take a look at our LHIN boundary, the reaction from our part of the world is people, patients, seeing a future where the health care services they need are going to be centred in a big community versus a small, or they're going to be in a regional hospital at the expense of a community hospital, and they are going to be left to be travelling long distances in order to get the care that they need. I can tell you that that concern in northeastern Ontario is a concern that has been shared with me in northwestern Ontario as well, where people hear talk about consolidation and integration and see Thunder Bay, with its regional hospital, as now becoming the centre for all kinds of hospital services, at the expense of people who live in smaller communities and who now are now currently able to access services in some of those smaller communities.

I know the minister has talked about the consolidation of backroom services. But I was at a press conference that the minister was at a number of months ago where he wasn't just talking about access to backroom services and consolidation of backroom services; he was talking about—well, he used the example of cataract care. He referenced specifically eye care in Toronto and said it didn't make sense for any number of hospitals to be providing cataract care, eye surgery, when you could do that perhaps at one facility. You could increase volumes, and you could shift that work that was being done from other hospitals into either a single hospital or, in this case, he was essentially talking about a new facility where that would be done. We're not just talking about some backroom services, even though the minister has referenced that today. He was very clear to talk about cataract surgery.

When I look at the part of the world I come from, and when I look at the fact that in my LHIN there are at least four hospitals—five: a community hospital in Parry Sound—I say to myself, "Well, is what's going to happen here that the LHIN is now going to go out and decide that we're going to consolidate cataract surgery at, for example, the Sudbury Regional Hospital in my community?"

To have increased volumes, we're going to shut down the cataract surgery that's being done, for example, in

Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins or North Bay, and we're going to centre all that in Sudbury. People from across northeastern Ontario already come to Sudbury. For cardiac care, trauma, cancer and neonatal services, they come to the regional centre.

Do I think that people from northeastern Ontario who can currently get cataract surgery in their own community should have to come to Sudbury too? No, I do not, even though our community might benefit from that. I don't think so. I don't think people should have to travel three and a half hours from Timmins to come to Sudbury. I don't think they should have to travel four hours from the Soo to come to Sudbury, one and a half hours from North Bay or two hours from Parry Sound to access that type of surgery if those services are currently available in their hospitals. I don't see the fairness in that. I don't think that makes any sense.

I think people in northeastern Ontario are travelling far enough and long enough to access services at the regional centre. They shouldn't be asked, and they shouldn't be expected, to travel even more because the LHINs are going to consolidate some of these services in one particular centre. That comes at the expense of their community hospitals. That comes at their expense when they have to be on the road far from home, trying to access health care services out of their community. When we see consolidation, when we see integration and when we look at the LHIN boundaries, that's exactly what people from our part of the world are concerned about.

They have similar concerns in northwestern Ontario when they look at Thunder Bay and think that the LHIN is going to be responsible for determining how many services can come out of community hospitals in Red Lake, Fort Frances, Dryden etc. to be centralized in Thunder Bay so that they have to travel even farther and even longer for services that they can now access in their community.

I'm not going to be in favour of that, and I come from a community that might benefit. I say that because it's hard enough now for people to travel to Sudbury from northeastern Ontario for their services. We should not be asking and indeed we should not be expecting or wanting them to have to come to Sudbury even more for other services that the LHINs might want to centralize at the regional hospital.

The final point I want to make with respect to all of these services—because I've talked about people wanting the health care services they need, when they need them, as close to home as possible—also has to do with the patient's desire to have continuity of care when they can actually access that care.

If you look at the health care system, there has been nothing that has been more disruptive to patients with respect to continuity of care than the cut-throat bidding process we have seen in home care that was instituted under the previous Conservative government and has been kept in place under this government. There has been nothing more disruptive to patients than this particular process. Patients who have been involved with particular

caregivers through home care develop a very trusting and intimate relationship with those caregivers, and there is very significant upheaval for those patients when contracts in home care have changed.

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My very significant concern, as I look at this legislation and recognize that at some point in the future funding will be devolved to LHINs to purchase or acquire or get or obtain services at the local level, is that if the model the LHINs use is the competitive bidding model out of home care, then we will see massive disruption of patients and massive disruption to their services at the local level. If the LHIN decides, for example, with respect to community mental health services in my community, that instead of having a number of agencies continue to provide community-based mental health services, they are going to put out an RFP in order to have one agency deliver those services—if that's the model that's used—I can tell you that there will be massive disruption to clients, there will be significant loss of employment to those agencies that now deliver care and, just like the example in home care, you will see a driving down of the wages and salaries in that sector and you will also see an increased shift to private, for-profit agents of delivery, just like you have seen in home care.

Let me give some examples with respect to what has happened in home care in terms of contracts lost. This report goes back to February 2004. "Competitive bidding has resulted in massive and regular disruption of continuity of care. The impact of competitive bidding on the continuity of care for users of the system cannot be overstated. Each time a contract is lost, clients face a change of caregivers and the manner in which their services are delivered. Instability in the sector contributes to poor working conditions and means care workers are leaving the sector, exacerbating poor continuity of care. Competitive bidding has a disruptive and turbulent impact on the continuity of care received by care recipients. In recent months, over 22,000 clients have been affected by the loss of contracts through competitive bidding: 600 in East York, 1,700 in Niagara, 1,300 in Ottawa, 15,000 in York region, 1,200 in Kingston, 2,700 in Sudbury-Manitoulin, 1,000 in Wellington-Dufferin."

Frankly, in the case of Sudbury-Manitoulin, when the VON lost the contract to Bayshore—they lost the contract because the CCAC at the time said the benefits package for the VON was too expensive—not only did they lose the nursing contract they had, but because that nursing contract was a significant portion of their overall work in the city, they ended up going down altogether. So a not-for-profit community organization that had been providing services for over 80 years in our community was lost entirely. That was a great loss in our community.

It's very clear that there's disruption to clients through this process, and it's very clear that competitive bidding in home care has resulted in major disruption to thousands and thousands of clients across the home care system. But that's not the only disruption there has been.

There has been very significant disruption to workers themselves through this process. For example, the Ontario Community Support Association reported that, prior to the introduction of competitive bidding, there were 24 small, non-profit agencies servicing local markets in Ontario. Only three are left today. There has been a major downsizing in terms of the support staff they were providing to go into the homes of clients to provide home care services.

There have been a number of dislocations of other workers as well. Let me give you a snapshot of some of these. In Haldimand-Norfolk, the nursing contract was lost by the VON to Comcare, resulting in the layoff of 140 full-time and part-time nurses and nurse practitioners by the time the contract ended in October 2004. In Brant in the summer of 2004, a contract held by the Red Cross for more than 50 years was lost to Comcare, resulting in 115 full- and part-time workers being laid off.

VON and SEN have lost contracts in Niagara Falls to care partners in Saint Elizabeth Health Care, with at least 110 VON nurses and an estimated 50 SEN nurses being laid off by their contract's end in September 2004. VON had provided service in the area for 85 years.

The Visiting Homemakers Association, VHA, health and home support, laid off 200 nurses and home workers in Ottawa in August 2004 when they lost their contract. They had been providing services in Ottawa for nearly 50 years.

In August, Community Care East York lost its contract to VHA Home HealthCare and Spectrum, affecting 50 to 70 staff. They had been providing service for 20 years.

Kingston VON lost its nursing contract to ParaMed, Allcare and Red Cross, forcing it to lay off at least 70 staff in April 2004. VON had provided community nursing in the area for over 100 years. In the same community, Allcare staff was laid off when their contract was lost to the Red Cross and ParaMed.

Not-for-profit SEN Community Health Care in Hamilton lost its Halton and Niagara contracts in March to Windsor-based for-profit Care Partners, which had no history in the Niagara-Halton region.

Then there's the VON in Sudbury, and finally, in December 2004, Community Home Assistance to Seniors—CHATS—lost their personnel support contract in York region, forcing the layoff of 350 home care workers.

A cut through a bidding in home care has had a really significant negative impact on clients. It's had a really significant impact as well on those home care providers providing service. If that's the model that we're going to use through the LHINs in the community as they purchase, obtain or get services at the local level, I can tell you, the destruction that we've seen in one small sector will be magnified a thousandfold across the entire health care sector.

It's not only that, because what has happened with the opening up of home care to competitive bidding has been a significant shift in the makeup of home care in Ontario.

We have moved essentially from a system where most of the providers in the system were not-for-profit providers to a system where now, at least as of 2001, almost 50% of those providing care and home care are for-profit agencies. Let me just give you a little bit of background:

"Prior to the introduction of competitive bidding, the home care sector was served predominantly by not-for-profit agencies with deep roots in the community and a long tenure of operation, in some cases lasting more than a century. The introduction in 1996 of competitive bidding has transformed the culture of the sector resulting in an influx of the for-profit home care industry. Over time, small, community-based agencies have lost contracts to larger for-profit as well as non-profit companies. The culture of the home care sector has changed due to the expansion of for-profit companies and the consolidation of the 'market' in the hands of a few large providers creating a market oligopoly. Now, large companies, for-profit as well as not-for-profit, travel around the province making bids to secure market share. These corporations often do not exist in any tangible way in the communities they seek to serve."

That was certainly the case when Bayshore applied for the nursing contract in Sudbury. They didn't even have an office in our community, not to mention not having any staff in the community either.

"Not-for-profit providers have been forced to emulate for-profit providers in order to compete and have adopted a number of negative practices.

"The most reliable and recent figures show that the percentage of home care nursing market share provided in Ontario by for-profit service providers increased from 18% in 1995, two years prior to the introduction of competitive bidding, to 48% in 2001."

Given the examples that I've used with respect to changes in contracts where many for-profit agencies won those contracts, I suspect the composition is even higher now in terms of for-profit service providers in the system.

When the for-profit providers are in the system, it means funding that should be going directly into home care, into patient care, instead has portions of that money diverted to the profits of the home care providers. This government, which has talked about wanting to stop the creeping privatization of health care services, has not changed the Conservative position with respect to cutthroat bidding in home care. Indeed, cutthroat bidding remains in Ontario, first under the Conservatives and now under the Liberals. You would think that the government, which claims to be concerned about creeping privatization of health care, would be concerned about the increasing privatization of home care and the fact that so much of the money that should go to patient care ends up being diverted into the profits of these providers, but the government has done nothing about that. I tell you, if the home care model, the cutthroat bidding home care model, is applied to the LHINs, if that's the model they use for the disbursement of funds, we haven't seen anything yet in terms of disruption to clients, disruption

and loss of workers, driving down of wages and salaries of workers in that sector, and increasing money that should be going into patient care instead being diverted into the profits of those for-profit providers.

1750

The legislation is silent on what mechanism the LHINs are going to use in order to make decisions about purchase or acquisition of services. I raise this concern because we've already seen what's happened with respect to home care. Any model that emulates that at the LHIN level, for a broader basket of health care services, for a broader range of health care services, will be absolutely devastating to clients in the system, to workers in the system, and it will certainly end any effort by the government to stop creeping privatization. On the contrary, you'll see greatly increased privatization.

As I wrap up, let me go back to what I said at the beginning, that patients watching this really are concerned about a couple of things: They get the health care they need when they need it, as close to home as possible, and that there is continuity with respect to that provision of care. The health care they need, when they need it, how they get it and continuity are direct functions of the pool of money available for health care and the government policies that affect the provision of the same. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, in the LHIN legislation that's going to change any of that.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: To anyone who has just tuned in for the last hour here at Queen's Park, I just want to let you know, that Fear Factor is still running in its normally scheduled time. What you had was the NDP version of Fear Factor. The NDP version of Fear Factor could be wrapped up in a couple of other words: It's called the status quo.

For an hour there, an honourable member has chosen, instead of actually addressing the heart of the bill and addressing the idea that what we're doing is taking a whole lot of power that's currently exercised here at Queen's Park, taking that power and giving it to people at the community level—not on the view that the NDP panacea will ever hold true. The NDP panacea: their every day, everything that they do is based on this one simple—to them, at least—thing, the idea that there will always be an endless pot of money. It's the NDP end of the rainbow. It's a pot of gold, just in time for Christmas. This is what the New Democratic Party is offering.

Unfortunately, the member goes to such extraordinary efforts to try and sow fear amongst Ontarians that she does nothing to recognize the fundamental power and capacity to contribute that Ontarians have on offer. At the heart of this bill is a sense of optimism that cannot be found anywhere in today's NDP, an optimistic view that when people of good conscience, with commitment to community, come together, they can find within them the capacity to do things differently, and that "differently" doesn't need to mean worse.

The honourable member talks about changes, and she says change is bad. She wants the status quo, but at the same time Ontarians have told us that the status quo is

not getting the job done. When the people in north-western Ontario seek to grapple with the wait times challenges that they have on hips and knees, it doesn't mean that they consolidated all services to Thunder Bay Regional; rather, they got Dryden involved in the act of actually performing hips and knees. This is the capacity of community to unlock good solutions, and that's what LHINs are about.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I didn't agree with everything that the member for Nickel Belt offered in this debate this evening, but I think the main theme, as I understood it, that patients want the service when they need it and where they need it, was an important one and certainly one that I agree with.

The minister talks about the fear, and I think there is a legitimate right to be concerned about this legislation on the part of people who will require health care services in this province in the future. I think there are a lot of question marks surrounding this legislation, unanswered questions. The member talked about certain elements of the legislation being silent, the purchase and acquisition of services, but there are many other, to say the least, grey areas. I think it is a legitimate concern.

If you look at a particular service, and I'll use my riding as an example, Prescott looks to Brockville General Hospital for a variety of services. If in that community, in that area, those services are deemed to be ones that will be centralized out of Belleville, for example, it's an hour-and-a-half to a two-hour drive in good weather. They don't talk about those kinds of decisions, which potentially and in reality will be taken by the local health integration networks.

The problem: We talk about people watching this. I doubt that too many people are watching it, and of those who are, how many will really understand what LHINs are all about? I call this legislation a bit of a stealth bomber, because if you look at when this is actually going to start to impact the residents of this province, it's not going to be until after the next provincial election. That's when we're really going to see the impacts start to flow across the province, and that's certainly regrettable. They can continue to fool people with respect to the beneficial impacts without talking about the negative impacts.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): It's a couple of minutes before we adjourn for the day, I suspect. The whole discussion is around having service where and when they need it. I'm going to take two examples over the past year.

About a year ago, there was a mother who had been hospitalized for some treatment for an extended period and was in a position to go home, but needed to have a treatment called VAC—vacuum assisted closure. I don't know how the technology works particularly, but I get the idea that this mechanism allows people to be serviced more effectively, in the hospital or the home, to allow the wounds to cleanse more effectively and to close up quicker, and people to be back on their feet. Unfortunately, she was in the hospital and they couldn't send the vacuum they had at the hospital home with her, so she

couldn't go home. Thus, they turned to the CCACs, but they didn't have enough of the units available to provide her with the service, so she had to stay in the hospital. The CCACs weren't talking to each other in the capacity to borrow one from the other effectively. As a result, the media got involved. She was stuck in the hospital. With the media engagement, they found a solution. That was pre-LHIN, pre-engagement of the public.

Recently, I sat in on a meeting, for the first time ever in my time in public life, in which we had three hospitals, the CCAC, a range of political folk and some other community organizations talking about how these community organizations and hospitals were going to begin to work more effectively together. They were laying out some things they were already doing, some back-office activity for efficiencies, beginning to put together communication networks that didn't exist. But it was a clear indicator that things like the CCACs and hospitals were going to be talking, needed to talk and understood the need to talk, but they needed the LHIN framework to make them do that, to encourage them and provide the mechanism for them to be able to achieve those results.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments on the speech made by the member for Nickel Belt to do with LHINs, the local health integration networks. My concern with the LHINs relates to my own riding. We have a unique situation where the two CCACs—community care access centres—that service most of the riding are integrated into the hospitals.

I was in Mattawa, touring the hospital there, and I might add that Mattawa is desperately in need of a new hospital and they're waiting for the government to act on starting their new hospital. There I met with the board of the Mattawa hospital and they advised me that if you want to look at the integration of health care services, you should look at the model in Parry Sound, because in Parry Sound you have the hospital, long-term care and the CCAC all integrated together in one unit, and that really works in rural Ontario.

I hope we don't lose that integration with this new LHIN model we're moving toward, which is supposed to be bringing decisions closer to the community, more to the local level, yet in the Parry Sound side of the riding, we will go to a local health integration network that goes from Parry Sound to James Bay. It's just an immense area. So I am concerned about losing the model we have in Parry Sound–Muskoka.

On the Huntsville–Muskoka side, we have what's now the Muskoka–East Parry Sound health service. Once again, we have the CCAC connected to the hospital board and long-term care all integrated. That's a model that seems to be working very well in our area. I think it's one the government should be expanding across the province instead of this model of these huge LHINs they're talking about.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Martel: Thank you very much, Speaker. I know it's late.

Let me go through this again. For those Ontarians who think that the access to health care they need is access to a chiropractor or an eye exam or a schedule for a physiotherapy clinic, is the LHIN going to do anything about that? No, they will not.

For the cancer patients who were here last week trying to get access to life-saving drugs, is their LHIN going to do anything about their access to life-saving drugs? No, the LHIN will not.

For those many seniors who need home care but need the government to lift the restrictions on hours of care and what kind of services can be obtained, will the LHIN in your community do anything about that? No, it will not.

For those folks who are backed up in the ER, who need life-saving treatment in the ER, is the LHIN going to be able to do anything about them getting life-saving treatment?

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Of course.

Ms. Martel: Of course the LHIN will not.

For those seniors in long-term-care homes who need more personal support workers, who need access to behavioural management, who need access to services

regarding dementia, will the LHINs be able to provide those services? No, they will not.

For the many patients in hospitals, in public health units, in long-term-care homes, who need access to a front-line nurse and can't get that access, are this legislation and the LHINs going to be able to do anything about that? No, they will not.

For people in my community who are stuck in the hospital getting care they don't need, unable to access a long-term-care bed or addiction services, is the LHIN in my community going to do anything about that and respond to their need? No, the LHIN is not.

For all the examples, the reason the LHIN will not is because, at the end of the day, no matter how much the minister and Liberal members want to pretend, getting service you need when you need it is a function of the pool of money that's available for health care and government policy, and the LHINs have nothing to do with either of those.

The Acting Speaker: It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)		Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)		Racco, Mario G. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)		Mauro, Bill (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Thornhill	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Thunder Bay–Superior	
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation	North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord	
	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	McNeely, Phil (L)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa–Orléans	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Ottawa–Vanier	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Toronto–Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
	Kennedy, Hon. / L'hon. Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Oxford	Miller, Norm (PC)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Parkdale–High Park	Wilkinson, John (L)	Waterloo–Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Leal, Jeff (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Perth–Middlesex	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Peterborough	Parsons, Ernie (L)		Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Yakabuski, John (PC)		Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire
Prince Edward–Hastings	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)		Munro, Julia (PC)
Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Oraziotti, David (L)		Cordiano, Hon. / L'hon. Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Samia–Lambton	Duguid, Brad (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Sergio, Mario (L)
Sault Ste. Marie			
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse		
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux	York North / York-Nord	
Scarborough–Agincourt	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Wilson, Jim (PC)	York West / York-Ouest	
Simcoe–Grey	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Scarborough–Rouge River	Vacant
St. Catharines	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général	Whitby–Ajax	Vacant
St. Paul's	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		
Stoney Creek			

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Garfield Dunlop, Andrea Horwath,
Cameron Jackson, Kuldip Kular, Phil McNeely
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Ernie Hardeman, Rosario Marchese, Ted McMeekin,
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Kuldip Kular, Norm Miller, Richard Patten,
Michael Prue, Monique M. Smith,
Norman W. Sterling, Kathleen O.Wynne
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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No. 26



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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 30 November 2005

Mercredi 30 novembre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 30 November 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 30 novembre 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PAUL HENDERSON

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound):

There aren't many of us, with the exception of some of the younger members, who don't remember the goal of the century. The date was September 28, 1972, and it was the Canada-Russia summit hockey series. The goal, with 34 seconds remaining in the final game, was scored by Paul Henderson. That famous goal won the game and the series for Canada, and created a hockey hero: Paul Henderson.

On the 25th anniversary of that goal, Paul Henderson was immortalized on a Canada Post stamp and a Royal Canadian Mint silver coin. He is also a member of the Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, but has not been named to the Hockey Hall of Fame.

A Wingham radio station—the Bull, 94.5—with the help of Mike Brough, wants to change that. Paul Henderson, a native of Lucknow, is being supported by them, and they are currently recruiting signatures for a petition to help get Paul in the hall. Their goal is to get 50,000 signatures, which they will then present to the Hockey Hall of Fame board.

Until January 1, 2006, listeners can sign the petition on-line at www.945thebull.ca or at several area businesses from Wingham to Goderich to Owen Sound.

In a show of support to his hometown, Paul Henderson spent last weekend in Lucknow as a special guest at the Lucknow regional silver stick hockey tournament.

I believe Paul Henderson deserves a spot in the Hockey Hall of Fame, and I am pleased to promote this cause as well as add my name to the list of supporters.

MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY LIVING

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):

This fall, I had the honour of representing our government at the 40th anniversary festivities of Middlesex Community Living. It was a wonderful celebration of dedication by board members, staff, parents and family, volunteers, supporters and, most importantly, those people who are supported.

We heard from a mother, Catherine Case, about her determination to find support for her son, Bob, who was

born with Down's syndrome. She told us about the lack of resources available to her 40 years ago and her decision to ignore her family doctor's advice to have Bob institutionalized. It's obvious today that Catherine and her husband made the right decision. Bob is now supported by Middlesex Community Living, he is in supported employment, he lives with another gentleman in their own apartment and is a valued member of our community. That was the start of the community living effort in Middlesex.

Over the years, I've often seen Bob and his friends around Strathroy. They are truly contributing members of our community. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate everyone who has associated with Middlesex Community Living and all such associations throughout Ontario for the work they do.

Attitudes have changed greatly over the past 40 years, but we still have a long way to go.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Who knew that deer lived in the forest and who knew that apples grow on trees? Well, thanks to Dalton McGuinty's multi-million dollar advertising campaign, taxpayers who think that deer live in condos or apples grow in grocery stores will now have been given this thoughtful and profound lesson in science. Dalton has made a lot of wild claims in his day, but the notion that his greenbotch plan has given rise to deer and apples is a bit too much even for his standards.

Not only that, but Dalton's greenbotch foundation has opened up plush new offices in the high-rent real estate in the Yorkville area. Putting the greenbotch headquarters in downtown Toronto is like putting Ontario's capital in Labrador.

If the Premier had bothered to ask municipalities in the greenbelt, farmers in the greenbelt and taxpayers in the greenbelt, they would have told him to put that money into helping out municipalities like Lincoln, Pelham or Grimsby, which had their funding cut and their growth frozen. Farmers in the greenbelt would have told them to put the money into programs to assist the marketing of their products, research and to help them out with all the challenges that farmers are facing today.

When my constituents and constituents throughout the greenbelt area see a \$1.5-million minimum of taxpayer money going to these rather insulting advertisements and not flowing to assist farmers or small municipalities, do

you know what they say? "No wonder they call it the greenbotch."

ANDREW STEWART

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): This Saturday marks a very tragic event in the history of East York. In fact, it's the first anniversary of the death of Andrew "Drew" Stewart. He was a young man, 16 years old, who was killed in front of a set of restaurants on Coxwell Avenue, just north of East York Collegiate. It was something that shocked our entire community. It was something for which I think we as a community, we as a neighbourhood were unprepared for: that two teenaged boys would be involved in an altercation and that one of them would pull out a knife and kill a young man who was doing nothing more than defending his friend.

But his mother and his friends have asked for peace. They do not believe in retribution and they have asked the community to remain calm, and in fact the community has remained calm. Drew's mother did up a T-shirt with Drew's face on it and with the very good words underneath, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good."

This Saturday, people of East York will gather to remember Drew. We will be at Taylor Creek Park, just opposite Crescent Town. We will be planting a tree in his memory and we will be talking to all the people of our community and the greater Toronto and Ontario communities to ask them to look at what is troubling youth, to ask them to please, please remain calm and, in her own words, "overcome evil by good."

MILL CLOSURE

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I had planned a different statement today from the one I'm presenting, but received some news this morning that must be shared with this House. Today, Domtar announced that it will be closing a number of mills, among them the one in the city of Cornwall. This comes as a blow to both the city and the rest of my riding. The Domtar mill has been a pillar of the community for decades.

My deepest sympathies go out to the men and women who awoke this morning to the most unfortunate news possible. My late father worked at Domtar. This news certainly comes as a direct blow to me as well. To these men and women I extend my support and the support of the government of Ontario.

1340

From the get-go, I have worked with my colleagues, the Ministers of Economic Development and Trade, Energy, Natural Resources and Labour to defend jobs in the riding. Speaking with the Premier this morning, he voiced his concern and determination to overcome the difficulties this community presently faces. I want the people of my riding to know that their government, their Premier and I will double our efforts to promote the

benefits that my riding offers employers: a perfect location, a bilingual workforce and the most dedicated, hard-working individuals in the province. This government will do all it can to help them through these difficult times. I will work diligently with my provincial, federal and municipal colleagues to encourage job opportunities for the people of Cornwall and all of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh. I certainly want to extend my thanks to the mayor of the city of Cornwall, Phil Poirier, for his diligent work on this file too.

BILL FARLINGER

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): On Monday, November 28, Bill Farlinger, a good friend and a great citizen of Ontario, passed away. Bill was a very successful businessman and a chartered accountant, retiring in 1993 as chairman and chief executive officer of the very large accounting firm Ernst and Young. After that, members of this Legislature will remember that he served as chair of Ontario Hydro and its successor company, Ontario Power Generation, until 2003.

For his philanthropic contributions to Ontario and Canada, Bill received the Order of Canada and many other prestigious awards. Bill worked hand in hand with his wife Esther, raising millions of dollars for many different charitable causes.

I met Bill in 1990, when he agreed to help Mike Harris become the leader of our party and, later, Premier of Ontario. I was impressed that a man of his status and responsibility would devote significant time and effort to help Mike. He did it because he believed in Mike and because he felt a strong sense of duty to his province and his country. Bill was one of Mike's most important advisers and friends.

In 1996, as energy minister, I went to Bill, then chairman of Ontario Hydro, to divide the corporation into two entities, one for generation and one for transmission. In spite of huge opposition from within his organization, Bill carried out this division because he saw it as the best solution for Ontario. He worked hard at OPG, seeking solutions to long-standing and very difficult problems. I believe he did the best that anyone could, given the circumstances, and I thank him for his service and dedication.

Bill was adored by his wife, Esther, and his children, Brian, Pamela, Craig, Leonard, David and his stepson Philip, and their spouses. His family, his grandchildren and his many friends will miss Bill, and our heartfelt condolences go out to them today.

YOUTH SERVICES

Mr. David Orazietti (Sault Ste. Marie): I rise in the House today to recognize an important investment our government is making in Sault Ste. Marie. This \$6-million project will result in 20 to 30 new jobs at a 16-bed youth justice centre, and is part of our \$30-billion five-year plan to renew Ontario's infrastructure. The architectural work is presently being completed, and construction is

expected to begin in the summer of 2006, with the centre to open in 2007.

Following the election of our government, we created the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to better coordinate and serve the young people of this province. I want to commend the first Minister of Children and Youth Services, Marie Bountrogianni, and the present minister, Mary Anne Chambers, for ensuring that this new centre was in fact built in our city.

The past government closed our youth justice centre and chose instead to transport the area's youth to Sudbury at a cost of over \$500,000 per year, something our previous NDP member failed to reverse. We're addressing a very poor decision by the past government by ensuring that these young people receive the treatment and programs they need and deserve as close to home as possible.

The new centre represents a broader commitment to be not only tough on crime but smart on crime. Our government is committed to the development of a comprehensive youth justice strategy to enable young people to become responsible, accountable, law-abiding citizens. We'll continue to improve and develop new services and programs for young offenders that are more effective and that maintain the highest level of public safety for Ontarians. By recognizing the unique needs of youth in conflict, we can help keep our communities safe.

CO-OPERATIVES

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): It gives me great pleasure to welcome today the Ontario Co-operative Association and the Conseil de la Coopération de l'Ontario to the Legislature. Tonight they're jointly hosting their eighth MPP Queen's Park reception, and I invite all members of the Legislature to attend in the legislative dining room from 6 to 8 p.m.

There are more than 1,900 co-ops, credit unions and caisses populaires in Ontario, with over \$19 billion in assets, over 2.3 million members and employing thousands of Ontarians. Not only are co-op organizations a strong economic force; they're open to everyone, regardless of race, culture, religion, philosophical beliefs or economic standing.

A co-operative, as its name implies, is people coming together to meet a common need. It is essentially a form of business enterprise that can be utilized in all sectors of the economy, including health care, housing, food, agriculture, service, financial, youth, renewable energy and First Nations communities.

Tonight, as part of their reception, the Ontario co-operative sector is unveiling its white paper on co-operative development in Ontario. Two years in the making, the co-op sector's white paper, entitled *Capturing Co-operative Opportunities*, is the result of extensive consultation with the Ontario co-operative sector, with government representatives and with other stakeholders. It is a call to the Ontario government and the Ontario co-operative sector to work together to secure the province's collective prosperity.

JOURNALISTS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I rise today to recognize an organization called Journalists for Human Rights and its founder, Ben Peterson.

After receiving his M.A. in political science from the London School of Economics, Ben spent eight months in Accra, Ghana, advising the Ghanaian government on the incorporation of human rights into its constitution. From there, Ben realized there was a systematic abuse of human rights in many countries and widespread ignorance of the same throughout Canada and the world. The solution: Educate journalists about these abuses, not only in the countries involved but also in Canada and around the world, so they could write about them and educate us all about them.

In three short years, Journalists for Human Rights has offices in six countries, has chapters in all the journalism schools in Canada and has achieved sustainable funding that supports a staff of six. It is truly remarkable that leadership of this magnitude should come from new graduates, but then again, he is my nephew and he is the son of David Peterson. We should all expect the unexpected.

Today in the members' gallery we have Ben Peterson and his fellow workers, Carina Lentsch, Thomas Asiimwe and Lauren Hortie. May we all applaud their idealism and their accomplishments.

Applause.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that vacancies have occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of John Baird as the member for the electoral district of Nepean–Carleton, by reason of the resignation of Marilyn Churley as the member for the electoral district of Toronto–Danforth and by reason of the resignation of Jim Flaherty as the member for the electoral district of Whitby–Ajax.

Accordingly, I have issued my warrant to the Chief Election Officer for the issue of writs for by-elections.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 123, An Act to require that meetings of provincial and municipal boards, commissions and other public bodies be open to the public / *Projet de loi 123, Loi exigeant que les réunions des commissions et conseils*

provinciaux et municipaux et d'autres organismes publics soient ouvertes au public.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CONSUMER REPORTING AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RENSEIGNEMENTS CONCERNANT LE CONSOMMATEUR

Mr. Ruprecht moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 38, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act / Projet de loi 38, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les renseignements concernant le consommateur.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may have a brief statement.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This bill provides that if there has been a security breach and personal financial information has been stolen, consumer reporting agencies and our financial institutions must inform the consumer. This bill also provides that on credit files, vital information such as social insurance numbers must be masked in order to minimize identity theft. The bill further provides that consumer reporting agencies shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct or delete any information found to be unconfirmed.

This bill also provides that consumer reporting agencies shall only report inquiry records resulting out of actual applications for credit. The bill provides that consumer reporting agencies shall also report information on consumer reports in written or electronically transmitted form, and not orally. The bill provides that consumers are entitled to a copy of a report obtained by a third party upon request so as to be able to challenge its accuracy.

Finally, the bill incorporates guidelines for the storing and safekeeping of consumer information, including electronic signatures, under the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act for the purpose of minimizing identity theft.

WASTE DISPOSAL SITE 41 IN THE TOWNSHIP OF TINY ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE LIEU 41 D'ÉLIMINATION DE DÉCHETS DANS LE CANTON DE TINY

Mr. Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at Site 41 in the Township of Tiny / Projet de loi 39, Loi visant à

empêcher l'élimination de déchets sur le lieu 41 dans le canton de Tiny.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may have a brief statement.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): The bill prohibits the disposal of waste at site 41 in the township of Tiny, located approximately four kilometres north of the village of Elmvale and four kilometres south of the village of Wyevalle. The bill revokes an environmental approval that has been issued in connection with the possible disposal of waste at the site. The bill extinguishes certain causes of action that may exist in respect of the site, and the bill entitles the county of Simcoe to compensation from the crown in respect of certain expenses if the Legislative Assembly authorizes the payment of compensation.

DISCLOSURE OF CRIMES ON PROPERTY ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA DIVULGATION DES CRIMES COMMIS SUR DES BIENS

Mr. Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act respecting the disclosure of information about crimes to purchasers of land and to tenants / Projet de loi 40, Loi sur la divulgation de renseignements sur les crimes commis aux acheteurs de biens-fonds et aux locataires.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may have a brief statement.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): The bill amends the Conveyancing and Law of Property Act and the Tenant Protection Act, 1997, to provide that a vendor in an agreement of purchase and sale and a landlord in a tenancy agreement must disclose to the purchaser or tenant whether the property that is the subject of the agreement has been used to commit a crime during the time the vendor or landlord had a legal interest in the property.

MOTIONS

WITHDRAWAL OF BILLS 35 AND 101 AND NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding members who have resigned and private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Caplan has asked for unanimous consent to deal with the withdrawal of business before private members' hour. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that the order for second reading of Bill 35, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to protect workers from harassment in the workplace, standing in the name of Ms. Churley, be discharged and the bill withdrawn; that the order referring Bill 101, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act, to the standing committee on regulations and private bills, standing in the name of Mr. Baird, be discharged and the bill withdrawn; and that private members' notice of motion 4, standing in the name of Mr. Baird, be deleted from the Orders and Notices paper.

The Speaker: Mr. Caplan has moved that the order for second reading of Bill 35—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Caplan has asked for unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: that Mr. Ruprecht and Mr. Lalonde exchange places in the order of precedence such that Mr. Ruprecht assumes ballot item 14 and Mr. Lalonde assumes ballot item 59; and that notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot item 14.

The Speaker: Mr. Caplan has moved that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Shall the motion carry? Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): My question is for the Premier. As I'm sure your Attorney General has advised you, the Quebec Superior Court, in an alarming and disturbing decision, today lifted all conditions that had been placed upon Karla Homolka. This decision means, among other things, that Ms. Homolka can travel freely and unmonitored to any community in Canada, including St. Catharines, the home of her victims. Premier, do you now regret the failure of your government to play an active role in Ms. Homolka's appeal hearing?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): Last June, Ontario crown attorneys, acting as agents of the Quebec Attorney General, appeared before the provincial court in Joliette. They made submissions, all of which were accepted by the court, and a recognizance order was entered. Those submissions and those rulings were then put before the Quebec Superior Court. Obviously disappointed with the result, but the more than a year of intergovernmental legal collaboration that had taken place between Quebec and Ontario up until that date will certainly continue. It is our view that this decision is appealable. Our officials are in constant contact with Quebec officials, and I will be speaking with the Quebec Attorney General later today.

1400

Mr. Runciman: Mr. Speaker, I wasn't talking about the Joliette hearing. We all know that the Attorney General was front and centre when Ms. Homolka's release from prison was approaching, when all the cameras were turned on. But when her appeal was heard, he was missing in action. He dropped the ball. The reality is that this Attorney General and his officials were once again outsmarted by Ms. Homolka and her lawyers. Ms. Homolka brought in an expert witness to testify that she posed no risk, and Ontario failed to counter.

Minister, how do you explain to the victims' families and all Ontarians your failure to pull out all stops to ensure the restrictions on Ms. Homolka remained in place? How do you explain that failure?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Well, I don't think anybody here can imagine what the victims' families go through any time the name Homolka comes up, let alone when a hearing takes place. I spoke with the lawyer for the victims' families, Mr. Danson, today and indicated that, just as we have been in constant consultation with the victims' families—I met with them and our lawyers have been in constant discussions with Mr. Danson, who was present at the hearing in the spring and also at the appeal—that will certainly continue and that we will continue to do everything we can to put in place the restrictions that will protect them and the public as long as Homolka is in Canada.

Mr. Runciman: Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General can use all the words he wants to weasel out of his responsibilities and to justify his failure, but it won't work with the people in St. Catharines or the people of Ontario. In the original hearing, Ontario crowns were sworn in as Quebec crowns. That didn't happen this time. Unlike the killer, Ontario did not provide expert witness testimony to counter her so-called expert, who testified that she didn't pose a danger to the public. You also refused to fund the French and Mahaffy families' attendance at the appeal hearing, and you forced their lawyer to pay his own way—an abysmal record. The French and Mahaffy families are devastated by this decision. What are you going to do now to ensure that this decision is appealed?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: As I indicated to the victims' families' lawyers today—and have indicated already—we are urging the Quebec Attorney General to appeal. He has jurisdiction. If this were in Ontario, there is no question that we would be appealing.

The member is mistaken: Mr. Ramsay and other crown attorneys from Ontario were present at the appeal, were in constant contact and were advising the Quebec crown attorneys throughout the entire appeal.

Mr. Runciman: I did not say that.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Look, this is not over. It's not over in Quebec and it is certainly not over in the province of Ontario, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you that if we receive any information that she plans on coming to Ontario, we will be going before Ontario courts to seek a recognition order in the province of Ontario. In the meantime, we are urging Quebec authorities to appeal this decision.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Energy. What exactly are your contingency plans in the event that Calpine Corp. declares bankruptcy, as is being predicted by analysts, and pulls out of their contract to build a 1,005-megawatt facility, a natural gas plant in Sarnia that you say will make up 11% of your loss by your irresponsible promise to close Ontario's coal-fired plants?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I thank the member for the question. I'd like to assure the member that the partner of Calpine is Mitsui. I had a conversation with the president of Mitsui. He informs me that they are in the process of opening up their office in Toronto in order to follow through with their commitment on the 1,000-megawatt proposal.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm not sure that we find that reassuring. The former minister, when he announced the Greenfield Energy Centre, of which Calpine is a partner, said, "The projects announced today represent a significant portion of our commitment to replace coal with cleaner sources of supply. In particular, the two projects near Sarnia will be sufficient to replace most of the capacity at the Lambton coal-fired station."

Minister, Calpine's project alone accounts for more than 11% of your scheme to replace coal-fired power in our province. Now the project is in serious jeopardy. In March 2001, Calpine's shares traded for \$58; yesterday those same shares traded for 75 cents. Merrill Lynch analyst David Silverstein said yesterday that a bankruptcy filing is "likely." Again, what is your backup plan to ensure that the lights stay on, given your poorly conceived plan to shut down Ontario's coal-fired stations?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Again, Mr. Murakami, the president and CEO of Mitsui Canada, confirms that the change will not—underline "not"—affect the project. They have, in fact, their contingency plans within their agreement with Calpine. So again, I reassure the member that this is under the total and complete authority of

Mitsui, and we have every confidence in Mr. Murakami of Mitsui, which is the partner in Calpine.

Mr. Yakabuski: So one phone call and everything is all right in Liberal land again.

Minister, unfortunately your entire scheme to phase out coal-fired energy plants has been one bungle after another. First, you promised to close all plants by 2007, and then, in typical Liberal fashion, you changed that to 2009. Then you announced a series of RFPs for alternatives to coal. Only in August of this year it was announced that the 280-megawatt Greenfield North Power project in Mississauga will not proceed. The 570-megawatt Invenergy project in Sarnia was refused rezoning by St. Clair township in October. The city of Thunder Bay is calling for an environmental assessment of the natural gas pipeline for the 310-megawatt Thunder Bay generating station. Now Calpine's 1,005 megawatts is in serious jeopardy.

Specifically, what is your plan—not your phone call, but your plan—to ensure that the lights stay on in Ontario under your coal-fired policy?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Thank you very much for the question. One thing I can assure the member is that we will not flip-flop like you have. We will in fact build, we will in fact maximize and we will in fact create. Maybe I should ask the member if they have changed their mind about the closure of coal, which was in their platform, and have suddenly taken another perspective.

We are on target. We have put in place 9,000 megawatts. We have 2,300 that came in. We were going to build new generation—which we have done. For the first time, we have an 80-fold increase in wind capacity in this province. We are going to maximize our existing generation—a new Beck tunnel, for example. We are going to maximize our transmission, which we did with Manitoba. And we are going to create a culture of conservation, which nobody has looked at for the last 12 years.

PLANT CLOSURES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Today your government's policy of driving electricity rates through the roof killed another 700 jobs: 520 jobs at the Domtar paper mill in Cornwall and another 185 jobs at the Domtar paper mill in Ottawa. It's very clear that not only is your policy of driving electricity rates through the roof destroying jobs, but your so-called forest industry competitiveness strategy is being ignored by the industry. Since you've announced it, three mills have shut down. I urged you yesterday to announce that you are going to extend the Ontario Power Generation revenue cap for another two years so there would be some stability in electricity rates and they wouldn't go even higher. Now, after another 700 jobs have been killed, will you finally do the right thing and make that announcement?

1410

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): First of all, let me say that I

had the opportunity to speak with not only the president and CEO of Domtar earlier today, but as well with the mayor of Cornwall. I had the opportunity to express my concerns to both, but especially to the mayor my desire and the willingness on the part of our government to work with the mayor, the council and all the people of Cornwall to see what we can do to help strengthen that local economy.

Let me say as well that it's important to recognize that Domtar made it perfectly clear in their press release that the closure was driven by the high dollar. Also, there were closures of two mills in Quebec, which the leader NDP will recognize as well, as well as another in BC. He would like to lay this at the feet of our government, specifically on the issue of electricity policy, but I think, in fairness, that would be much less than accurate.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, I read the press release. The mill in British Columbia is going up for sale because they believe it will be sold. You see, electricity rates there aren't through the roof. Similarly, the mills you talk about being closed in Quebec are not paper mills; they're two sawmills that are being consolidated because Quebec doesn't have enough wood fibre that is suitable for sawmills.

The vice-president of operations who was at the closure spent five minutes telling the workers, "This is not your fault. You, the workers, have done everything. It's the outrageous electricity prices in Ontario that are forcing the closure of this mill." That's what the vice-president said.

Premier, here's what has happened since you announced you had a policy to help the forest sector: Norampac has laid off 275 in Red Rock; Cascades has laid off over 500 in Thunder Bay; Weyerhaeuser has laid off 40; now 185 in Ottawa and more than 500 in Cornwall. How many workers have to lose their jobs before you admit your policy—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know the leader of the NDP tends to look at everything through electricity lenses. He would somehow surmise that electricity prices in the province of Ontario have led to the closures of mills in New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Quebec and BC, as well as in other parts of North America and indeed throughout the world. I beg to differ. There are some very serious challenges faced by the forestry sector in the international community—of that, there is no doubt. We have put forward a \$680-million strategy to help support our sector here in Ontario. Part of that is a \$150-million forest sector prosperity fund, and I'm pleased to learn that more than two dozen companies in Ontario have already made applications to that particular fund so that working together we can put those mills on a more productive footing and help them transition into this new, highly competitive era.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, you ought to know about the Ottawa mill, because it has two paper machines on the Ottawa side of the border and one paper machine on the

Quebec side of the border. Here's the reality: The two machines on the Ontario side are being shut down. The machine on the Quebec side is going to run. You talk about Cascades. Cascades in Thunder Bay shut down their mill at the same time they announced they were going to invest more money in their mill in Quebec. What's the difference? The difference is this: \$80 a megawatt for electricity in Ontario, \$45 a megawatt for electricity in Quebec. That's why companies are investing in their mills in Quebec while they shut down in Ontario.

Union leaders and industry leaders believe you don't understand the seriousness of this. They're asking for a meeting with you. They have no confidence in your forest sustainability competitiveness strategy and they have no confidence in your minister. They want a meeting with you before thousands more jobs are lost. Are you going to do that, Premier? Will you meet with them?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me say that we remain very much committed to working with anybody in the forestry sector and doing everything we possibly can to help put this industry, which is under siege in the international community, on a more sustainable, productive and efficient footing.

This is not easy work, but I'm pleased and proud to say that we have put together what I think is a very important package of \$680 million. I'll further define that for the members opposite. There's a \$150-million forest sector prosperity fund. We've announced \$28 million of annual—that's ongoing—support for the maintenance of primary access roads. We're putting up \$10 million for an annual inventory program. That's on top of a \$350-million loan guarantee program.

My disappointment is that Domtar did not apply for any assistance so that we might have put in place a co-generation program that would have helped make their operation more efficient. Having said that, we will continue to work with the good people of Cornwall.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Minister of Energy: Your leader says you're interested in working with these companies. What you're doing is shutting them down.

But I want to ask you about your much-ballyhooed announcement about Calpine, that they were going to build a 1,000-megawatt natural gas plant in Sarnia. Yesterday, Standard and Poors, the credit rating agency, cut Calpine's corporate credit rating by two notches to level CCC, eight levels below investment grade, after it was announced that the chief executive officer and the chief financial officer were gone. Standard and Poors said, "The management strategy pursued by the prior CEO and CFO was to keep the company operating."

It sounds like Standard and Poors wants the company shut down. What does that do to your plans for lots of natural-gas-fired electricity, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I thank the member for the question. It's interesting that someone who indicates that, "We will continue to live with the effects of the coal mistakes for decades to come. Some of us will die before our time, victims of coal-fired generated air pollution"—that was Mr. Hampton in Public Power; obviously not particularly interested in replacing coal-fired.

I have answered the question. I will answer it again. Mr. Maasaki Murakami, president and CEO of Mitsui Canada, confirms—they are the partner with Calpine—that this change will not—underline "not"—affect this project. In fact, this project is going forward on schedule. I would be very happy, if this question is asked again, to repeat that this change will not affect the project.

Mr. Hampton: I'm not surprised the Premier didn't want to answer the question.

I want to quote Standard and Poors again: "An unfavourable court decision about Calpine's ability to sell or monetize assets, however, worsens Calpine's vulnerable financial position. This, compounded with uncertain prospects in the power markets, makes it unlikely the company will be able to meet its obligations with internal cash flow generation."

Calpine is the energy giant here. Calpine is on the financial ropes. Calpine is likely going to be driven into bankruptcy any day now.

I want to ask the Premier again: What's your plan to keep the lights on when all of your natural gas plants—or at least, so far, most of your natural gas plants—can't even get off the ground?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Again I'm pleased to repeat that Mr. Murakami, the president and CEO of Mitsui Canada, is a partner in the Calpine project. We have had reassurance from the gentleman that this does not affect the project and it will go forward.

I repeat that we do have a strategy and plan in place. We are going to build new generation, which we are doing. We are going to maximize our existing generation and transmission lines, which we are doing. We are going to create a culture of conservation, which is happening in this province as we speak.

Those are the plans and the strategy that include the vision, which means that we will move forward to produce a safe, secure, reliable electricity and power source for this province. That is our commitment, and that is what we are following through with. I have every confidence in Mitsui Canada. It is a very large international conglomerate with—

1420

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: Here's the situation: Calpine, one of your champions, is in trouble; two of your natural gas plants in Mississauga, supposedly to be built by Eastern, are in trouble; and you keep announcing a natural gas plant somewhere in downtown Toronto, but it can't get off the ground. Meanwhile, the major industrial users say that your electricity policy is killing 140,000 good-

paying industrial jobs. You announce a forest sector competitiveness strategy, but after you announce it, company after company announces they're shutting down, killing thousands of jobs, and leaving the province.

Industry leaders and union leaders are very concerned over what's happening. They see electricity rates going up, not down. They see more jobs being lost. They see communities being decimated. Will you meet with union leaders and pulp and paper industry leaders, Premier, or are you going to try to pretend there's no problem here?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I'd like to give a quote: "This is an historic event and good news in terms of Ontario's energy needs, good news for the environment as higher efficiency and cleaner fuels improve air quality, good news for ratepayers through improved reliability and efficiencies in our economy—and of course good news for Ontario's power industry."

Interjection: Who said that?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: The president of the Association of Power Producers of Ontario said that. In fact, they do support our initiatives of a balanced approach as we move forward.

As for the other question, we are meeting with the Power Workers' Union, and there's no problem meeting with them. I have that scheduled.

MUNICIPAL TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Premier: I want to direct to you today's Toronto Sun headline entitled, "A Fib By Any Other Name." The article refers to your Bill 37, which effectively allows new municipal taxes on everything from theatre tickets to drivers' registrations. This is the latest on a long, sorry list of broken Dalton McGuinty promises. You've already broken your promises: You're running multi-year deficits, you've already levelled a punishing new health tax on working families and now there's a new regime of taxes across the province of Ontario. Premier, does anybody give a tinker's damn about taxpayers on your side of the House?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I would encourage the member opposite to sit down or at least phone his leader, because he may be interested in the position that he's taken on this particular issue with respect to putting the city of Toronto on a stronger financial footing.

To quote Mr. Tory, who said, on May 7 last year, "We have to re-examine completely the relationship between the municipal and provincial government to give city governments more latitude to raise some of their own revenue if they choose to do so." He went on to say, "They will then be accountable for whatever they choose to do—to fund some things that may be priorities for these cities. Right now they have to go and ask for permission to do everything and I don't think that's right."

I would encourage the member opposite to sit down and work this through with his leader.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Premier too. Last Tuesday, when your minister

introduced the bill, the no respect for taxpayers act, I stated that this bill, if passed, would be a groundbreaking demonstration of how the McGuinty Liberal government is committed to tax and spend and will now ask the municipalities to help him do it.

My question is very simple: Can you tell the taxpayers of this province what types of new taxes you are going to allow them to foist upon their constituents without being asked? For example, are taxpayers going to be subjected to a new sales tax, a poll tax or an income tax? Premier, is this new increase in taxes that municipalities can collect for the province going to include municipalities all across the province, as the title of the bill suggests, or is it just going to be foisted upon the citizens of Toronto?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'll tell you what inspires and motivates the line of questioning the party opposite is pursuing at this point in time. The long and the short of it is that they don't believe they can trust the people who live in Ontario municipalities and that they cannot trust their duly elected officials. What we intend to do on this side of the House is turn this around and respect Ontario municipalities and give them the credence they are due. They sow division; they sow discord. We believe the best way to make this province work is to have people working together, and that's why we're going to recognize the credit and the respect that is due to Ontario municipalities.

WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Attorney General: It was your promises of safety for Todd Petahtegoose, his wife and child in the witness protection program that persuaded Mr. Petahtegoose to give evidence with respect to 10 gangster, biker and gangland murders in this province, and to testify for the crown against a senior Satan's Choice member in a murder trial. Once he did what he did, you're dropping him like a hot potato. As of today, not only has he not received the new identification, the new driver's licence, the new legal names and the new social insurance numbers, but he's being evicted from the accommodations that have been provided for him. As of midnight, he, his wife and 13-year-old daughter are on the street with their possessions in brown cardboard boxes.

Minister, why didn't you keep your promise to Todd Petahtegoose, and why won't you and your staff sit down with his lawyer, who is prepared to negotiate an interim resolution of this matter with you?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): There is ongoing civil litigation with respect to this very matter in which the plaintiffs are using pseudonyms. That ended yesterday when the member opposite decided to identify the individual in this House and identify where he's located right now.

This is before the courts right now. The plaintiff is taking a position. We, I, deny the allegations. We are taking a different position in the event that counsel are to discuss some kind of an alternative. That is for that

person's lawyer, and he is represented; he has a lawyer. That lawyer can speak with officials in the ministry. But again I say, it's before the courts. We deny the allegations. I'm not going to argue the case in this Legislature. I'm going to let the courts decide.

Mr. Kormos: Minister, the bikers and the gangsters know who Todd Petahtegoose is. He's the one who stood up in court and testified against them. That's why he needs a new identity; that's why he needs a new driver's licence; that's why he needs support; that's why he needs accommodation for himself, his wife and his child. You have encouraged witnesses to the scores of gangster and gangland shootings and slayings across Toronto over the course of the last six months to come forward, even if they're afraid, because you promised them that you would protect them under the Ontario witness protection program.

How does your abandonment of Todd Petahtegoose, his wife and his 13-year-old daughter, putting them out on the street as sitting ducks tonight, how does your abandonment of Mr. Petahtegoose and his family instil any confidence in your witness protection program by any of those witnesses who might otherwise have come forward with respect to those scores of murders these last six months?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I think it is absolutely outrageous that the member would suggest we ought not to have total confidence in the witness protection program. We are constantly trying to encourage citizens to come forward and participate in criminal investigations, whether they be involving gangs or otherwise. I have total confidence that the police officers and the Ministry of Attorney General officials who assist protected witnesses appreciate very well the difficult situations these witnesses find themselves in and make every effort to treat them fairly. Contrary to what this member is saying, and contrary to what this member is advocating, I urge people to come forward and participate in the justice system.

The witness protection program in the province of Ontario has got more experience and is more developed than any other witness protection program in the country, and I would encourage people to participate in it if they feel that is appropriate. I completely reject the allegations made by the member opposite.

1430

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Traditional Chinese medicine is something that is important not only to me, personally, but it is important to my community and to Ontarians across the province. In March, you asked my colleagues Minister Mike Colle, Peter Fonseca, Richard Patten and I to consult with Ontarians on how to best regulate both TCM and acupuncture. I can tell you that we heard from hundreds of Ontarians, including a wide array of health care practitioners and members of the public. Our findings were presented to you in our report this summer, and I know that you have been

working diligently to review our recommendations and make decisions on this matter.

Minister, I have been asked what stage the government is at in its progress toward regulating TCM and acupuncture, and whether the government is still committed to introducing this legislation. Could you advise me on whether we will still be able to regulate TCM and acupuncture?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Indeed, we will. The honourable member, alongside colleagues in our caucus—the members from Ottawa Centre, Eglinton—Lawrence and Mississauga East—as was stated in the question, spent quite a lot of time taking submissions from a variety of individuals.

In the election campaign, we committed to regulating traditional Chinese medicine. We know that it's a therapy that hundreds of thousands of people are taking advantage of; I amongst them, more recently. I want to say to the honourable member that we think it's important to fulfill the commitment to regulate it and to give them their own self-regulating college. It is important that this profession, which is enjoyed by so many people, is one where we can offer a very high standard that means that the patients will be very safe. This legislation will be forthcoming before Christmas.

Mr. Wong: Minister, I thank you for this assurance. As you know, there are so many Ontarians that benefit from the use of traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture. These forms of medicine have been practised for thousands of years, and have proven to be effective in keeping people healthy and for treating various ailments. I'm proud that this government is delivering on ensuring that these practices are regulated, that Ontarians will be able to benefit from these treatments and will be able to have full confidence in their safety.

Minister, are we going to be having a college for traditional Chinese medicine, and why is that important?

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'm going to leave that aside. We think the regulation of traditional Chinese medicine is important for the protection of Ontarians. We want to ensure, of course, that as hundreds of thousands of people are taking advantage of the services, they can be assured that those practitioners have been appropriately qualified. Accordingly, it's important to have a college; that's the tradition in the province of Ontario with self-regulation. We're going to build on that. In this instance, we've got good experience with that here in the province of Ontario.

This will be an energetic process; many people will be involved. It will take some time to build up the capacities of this college, but we've seen a good degree of willingness on the part of TCM practitioners and interested patients to see this happen. Because of the good work that's been done by these caucus colleagues, we have a good plan to move forward with. As I said, I'm very excited to be able to bring legislation to this House before we rise for Christmas.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Premier. Recently, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research released a series of reports showing that there is evidence for governments to set wait time benchmarks in three of the five priority areas: cancer, sight restoration and joint replacements. I ask you today: Are you going to keep your promise and set and announce the wait time benchmarks in these three areas by December 31, 2005?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm happy to report progress [*Failure of the sound system.*] looking forward to an opportunity in the time between now and December 31 to gather with other colleagues of ours from across the country. The role that we've played as co-chair of the FPT has allowed us to make quite a lot of progress, and jurisdictions across the country have been working very hard. Each of them is reporting some progress toward reducing wait times. Accordingly, directly to the honourable member, I can say yes, we will fulfill the commitments that we made in keeping with the first ministers' accord and the December 31 timeline.

Mrs. Witmer: If I heard you correctly, you're saying that you are going to set and announce those wait time benchmarks by the end of this year.

I would ask you about your commitment to Fabry's patients and their families. They have been begging you for more than two years for treatment for Fabry's. You made a commitment more than a month ago now that there was going to be a start to time-limited research trials for treatment. However, right away, after this, on Silverman Helps on Citytv on October 26, you started to backtrack and said the program would start in weeks or short months. I ask you today, Minister, will you live up to your promise to the Fabry's patients and tell us that those clinical trials are going to start within weeks or days?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: There's an interesting relationship between the supplementary question and the original question. But I do want to say—

Mrs. Witmer: Wait times.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Oh, I see. Very interesting.

I do want to say to the honourable member, on the issue of Fabry's, that she well knows the efforts I led on behalf of PT jurisdictions to encourage federal government participation in a research program that would extend the product on a pan-Canadian basis to all patients. Accordingly, the assurances that the honourable member seeks from me in terms of weeks or months are not ones that I'm easily in a position to offer, because there are other jurisdictions involved in this. However, I will get back to the honourable member with a more detailed report.

When I asked about this about four days ago, I was told that very strong progress was being made between federal and Quebec officials, Quebec being the lead for

PT jurisdictions on the research element of the plan. Of course, moving forward would make the product available to those with Fabry's, but it's critically important that we capture appropriate data to determine the benefits that may be accruing to those patients. I agree that we need to move as quickly as we can, and I'll continue to put pressure on to make sure that happens.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. You promised to bring a new approach to aboriginal affairs in Ontario. You promised to consult with aboriginal leadership whenever government actions might adversely affect their treaty rights. You promised to “build a better future for aboriginal children and youth” in partnership with aboriginal people. Those are your promises. My question is this: Why is your government attempting to pass Bill 210 through the Legislature without any of the consultations that have been repeatedly demanded by First Nations leadership in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to correct [*Failure of sound system.*] several meetings with aboriginal communities. We'll have another one today, and there are more scheduled.

Mr. Hampton: Maybe the Premier needs to inform his minister that holding a meeting with aboriginal people is not a consultation. The courts of Canada say that is not a consultation.

Here's a resolution of the Chiefs of Ontario dated November 11, 2004. They insist on a First Nations consultation process. Here are the Chiefs of Ontario in conference in June 2005, demanding a consultation process. I was speaking with aboriginal leadership this morning. They insist that no consultation process has taken place. So I'm going to ask the Premier: Will you suspend any of your attempts to pass Bill 210 until you have undertaken a consultation process with First Nations leadership on Bill 210?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: Once again, the member opposite is actually not speaking with accuracy. On November 8, for example, I spent five hours in meetings with some 20 or so people, and they were in fact encouraged by my willingness to listen to their issues and to work with them. I am totally committed to listening to First Nations communities. Their children are as important as every other child in this province.

1440

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. When I held my energy forum in Davenport, I was quite sur-

prised to find that most of the citizens are already conserving energy. For instance, they're using light bulbs that are fluorescent and programmed thermostats. They are also using energy in off-peak times whenever possible.

When these discussions come up, I often get asked what the government itself is doing to reduce energy usage. I know we are committed to reducing the amount of energy the government is using because we understand the environmental and economic benefits of conservation. Minister, what is this government doing to conserve energy?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I want to thank the member for the question. Just last Thursday, I introduced a proposed growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. That plan encourages municipalities to develop energy conservation strategies for municipally owned buildings, to identify potential sites for renewable energy generation, to develop policies for procuring renewable energy, and to create public education programs that work with communities and residents to reduce energy consumption.

Beyond that, our government is taking other key initiatives. One such initiative is to require the LEED silver rating on key infrastructure projects. LEED, just for the information of all the members, is Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. It sets standards for buildings to use less water, less power and less heat; in essence, creating smart buildings that will actively change our energy consumption. We have called for the silver standard in several projects, including the Durham consolidated courthouse and the Archives of Ontario. There are other initiatives, and I hope to get to those in the supplementary.

Mr. Ruprecht: One of the projects I hear quite often mentioned is the Enwave deep lake water cooling project. I understand it is price-competitive, clean and sustainable. Could you explain to this House and to the people of Ontario the benefits of this world-class project that I hear so much about?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, this was one of the issues I did want to bring to the attention of the House. Under the leadership of my colleague the Minister of Government Services, Gerry Phillips, we have entered into an agreement with Enwave to bring a deep lake water cooling system—it draws water from 83 metres below the surface of Lake Ontario. The system is part of an integrated district cooling system that covers the city of Toronto's financial district. District cooling was introduced in 1997 with the opening of Enwave's Simcoe Street cooling plant.

Our government's real estate service provider, the Ontario Realty Corp., has engaged Enwave to use its deep lake water cooling system for government buildings right here in the precinct of Queen's Park. By installing deep lake water cooling at Queen's Park, the government will continue to show this kind of leadership, as this project provides tremendous long-term energy, environ-

mental and economic benefits. By introducing deep lake water cooling at Queen's Park, 9.1 million kilowatt hours—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

PLANT CLOSURES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): That was a great project that we initiated back in our government days.

My question is for the Premier. Premier, it continues: 3,900 jobs at General Motors—with Ford and Chrysler yet to ring in—lost to the people of Ontario; ABB in Guelph, 280 jobs gone; Cascades in Thunder Bay, 370 jobs; La-Z-Boy in Kitchener-Waterloo, 413 jobs.

Interjections.

Mr. Chudleigh: Over 30 companies in Ontario have closed down, Premier, in the last—this is very amusing to the Minister of Natural Resources. Domtar a year ago had 910 employees. Today, they're closing; Ottawa, 185 employees gone. Humpty Dumpty in Brampton, 188 jobs; closed, gone to Montreal. Saint Gobain Advanced Ceramics in Brantford; gone, closed down.

What are you doing, Premier? It's all very well to make telephone calls, but it doesn't get the job done. Liberal Ontario is in trouble. What are you doing about it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I want to cite for the member the 214,000 new jobs that have been created by this great Ontario economy and the entrepreneurs and the people who work in this province. I want to cite something that's rather interesting: In the first two years of this government's mandate, as compared to the first two years of that government's mandate, seven out of eight jobs created were full-time jobs. During the first two years of your government's mandate, only five out of eight jobs created were full-time jobs. There is a jobs economy out there that is creating real jobs for people, and that's a lot more than you can say for the government that you were a part of.

Mr. Chudleigh: I don't think that answer is going to bring much relief to the tens of thousands of people in Ontario who, coming into the Christmas period, are looking at not having a job next year. The only fortunate thing you had was that your government followed our government. You didn't follow the NDP, who lost 60,000 jobs over their term of government.

The manufacturing industries and the forestry sector of this province are disintegrating under your watch. Their downfall will be your legacy. I ask you again: What plans does your government have to stop the bleeding in the manufacturing sector and the forestry sector of this once great province of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: It's rather interesting. I want to give you a quote from November 27, 2005: "From a provincial point of view, I think this province is as

competitive as we can possibly be in all aspects, whether it be in infrastructure or whether it be in tax jurisdictions." Who said that? None other than Ted Chudleigh on Focus Ontario. This province is indeed competitive. We are indeed investing in infrastructure, with \$30 billion announced for infrastructure over the next five years. We are becoming far more competitive. He was right when he said that.

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Earlier today, my staff had a chance to visit the NOHFC Web site. They noted that according to the Web site, when you total it all up, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. has allocated in grants and loans a total of \$85.5 million over the last two years. That's rather interesting. What we find rather interesting is that on November 1, you stood in this House and said that as of that date, NOHFC had spent \$117.3 million. Minister, can you tell me where the \$31.8 million went, the difference between what you announced and what's on your Web site?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I would be more than happy to tell the member and everyone in Ontario where the money went: It went into job creation in northern Ontario. There may be a necessity to update the Web site, but there is no reason for anyone to question that \$117 million has been invested in more than 440 projects, which has leveraged \$397 million and created 3,721 jobs. We are very proud of the refocused northern Ontario heritage fund.

Mr. Bisson: That's rather interesting, because when we talked to the staff at the NOHFC, they said that every penny they put out the door is listed on that Web site, and when you total up what's on Web site, there's a difference of \$31 million from what you announced in the House. So I've got a simple question: Are you prepared to table in this House all the expenditures of the NOHFC in order to reconcile where the \$31.8 million went?

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: There's absolutely no question that I am convinced that the northern Ontario heritage fund has spent \$117 million on job creation in northern Ontario. That has resulted in the creation of 3,721 jobs and has leveraged in excess of \$390 million. The fact of the matter is, the refocused northern Ontario heritage fund is working and is creating jobs in northern Ontario at a record-setting pace.

1450

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, the largest employer in my riding, Linamar, reports that they face a shortage of skilled tradespeople in the auto parts sector, yet when they locate candidates

from other countries, they have trouble getting immigration permits into Canada.

You recently signed the historic Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, which will quadruple funding for newcomers in Ontario—an increase of \$920 million. In the agreement, there is a specific section about Ontario developing a provincial nominee program, for the first time ever. I'd like to know: How will this provincial nominee program work, and how will it benefit my riding of Guelph-Wellington?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you very much to the member from Guelph-Wellington for the question. There has been a lot of discussion about this breakthrough agreement and the fact that, for the first time ever, this province has signed an immigration agreement which gives the people of Ontario \$920 million over five years. But another significant aspect of that agreement is that, for the first time, we're going to be full partners with the federal government in determining some immigration policies. One of the things we're going to be able to do is put in a provincial nominee program, which allows us, as a province, to select certain specific skilled-labour-shortage areas where we can match who's coming into the country and where they can go and find jobs, like the great city of Guelph, and help grow the economy and help industry in Guelph.

Mrs. Sandals: That's great news for my riding of Guelph-Wellington. Other provinces like Manitoba have had a provincial nominee program for some time. In fact, Quebec has had total control over its immigration selections. These other provinces already have the ability to nominate individuals wishing to make that province their new home, and have successfully used these programs to address specific labour market shortages.

Minister, what does it mean for Ontario now that we too will have a provincial nominee program? Can the auto industry in my riding expect similar success?

Hon. Mr. Colle: There are some very specific shortfalls in different parts of Ontario. This agreement will allow us to target certain groups of highly skilled immigrants who are very willing to come to Canada. There are also willing employers who have said that they can't expand their businesses because they don't have certain skilled employees. We will be able to do now what Manitoba has been doing for a decade, what Quebec has been doing for 20 years. This agreement, this historic, never-done-before agreement, brings fairness to Ontario, makes us full partners at the immigration table and makes us target special needs to help Ontario communities like Sudbury, like Cornwall, like Guelph. This is great news for increasing our economy and targeting the skills shortages which exist in this province. It also brings these hard-working, willing immigrants into Ontario.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I'd like to ask the Premier a question. In your first budget you cut OHIP coverage for physiotherapy in this province. Last March,

under immense pressure, you agreed to provide physiotherapy services for seniors in long-term-care facilities who were aged 65 or older. You announced as well that you were going to cut the amount of service from 150 treatments to 100. At the time, there was a promise made by your Minister of Health and his ministry that they would create a mechanism to allow for those seniors and the most severely disabled in this province to have services above the 100 threshold.

My question is this: Why is it that on August 17, September 14, October 5 and again in November, your government promised these seniors that they would have a mechanism in place and that promise has been broken each and every time? Why has your Ministry of Health turned its back on these seniors?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's interesting to always get questions about health care from a party that has on record a commitment to cut health care by \$2.4 billion, not to mention the fact that with respect to physiotherapy and the much-loved status quo that is the hallmark of that party, when we came to office, what we discovered was that some seniors in long-term-care homes were receiving hundreds and hundreds of physiotherapy treatments a year and many none. Accordingly, we decided that in an environment where our resources do have limitations, it was appropriate to move forward on an equitable basis, and that's what we've done. So if you are a senior in a long-term-care home in the province of Ontario, your access to physiotherapy has been enhanced quite greatly.

With respect to the exemption for those who have more pressing medical needs, I will be happy to address that specifically in the supplementary.

Mr. Jackson: This is kind of rich coming from a member of a political party—between David Peterson's five years and Bob Rae's five years, the debt in this province went up by \$65 billion and not one net new long-term-care bed was built under both of your governments' watches. So you don't need to lecture us about our commitment; we built 20,000 long-term-care beds.

Premier, your government is not only cutting 150 treatments to 100; as of April 1, you are cutting it further to 50. So how can your Minister of Health stand in this House and suggest to seniors that he is enhancing services when he is the biggest health cutter for seniors this province has ever seen?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Here is the Tory record on health care: hospitals, cut \$557 million in two fiscal years; OHIP, cut \$80 million, 1998-99; ODB, cut \$34.1 million; introduced the co-pay for seniors; community and public health, cut \$136 million; long-term care, 1996-97, cut \$23.5 million; closed 26 hospitals, 10,000 hospital beds; laid off 6,000 nurses.

With respect to the medical exemption, as promised in a November 24 bulletin that went out to designated clinics, that exemption program for those with medical necessity will be in place on December 1 this year. That is tomorrow.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. We'll wait. I would like to be able to hear the member for Trinity-Spadina. Order.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Premier. Researchers at the University of Toronto recently asked local youth gang members why they join gangs, and here's what one 23-year-old gang member had to say: "It's like the only jobs they got for poor black people is like McDonald's or Wendy's or some other [BS] like that. Low pay, low respect. You basically just a slave, just a punk, while some fat owner gets rich. I'm not going down like that."

You talk about being tough on the causes of crime, but quite frankly, we don't see any evidence of it. You talk about results. How would you expect me and our communities to judge you on your results thus far?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): First of all, the member raises a serious issue, and he should understand where we are coming from on this side of the House. I think it all has to do fundamentally with ensuring that young people have every educational and training opportunity they can possibly get their hands on. So far, we have \$1.9 billion in new investments in education since taking office, including hiring 4,300 new teachers, all kinds of new programs, new training opportunities for teachers and the like. We are also bringing in student success programs, one element of which is requiring that young people continue to learn until the age of 18.

Beyond that, we are investing \$6.2 billion, an unprecedented level of investment and commitment, in post-secondary education which is going to provide more training opportunities, more opportunities in our colleges, more opportunities in our universities, and \$1.5 billion of that new \$6.2 billion is dedicated to new student assistance programs.

1500

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would like to bring the members' attention to a guest we have in the members' west gallery. Helen Johns, who represented Huron and then Huron-Bruce in the 36th and 37th Parliaments, is with us.

PETITIONS

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): This is a petition to save Rideau Regional Centre, a home for people with developmental disabilities.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. Could members who are leaving please exit quietly. I would like to be able to hear the member for Lanark-Carleton. Order. That's why we have lobbies.

The member for Lanark-Carleton, with my apologies.

Mr. Sterling: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know you respect the right of individuals to read petitions in this House.

This is a petition about saving Rideau Regional Centre. It's a home to people with severe developmental disabilities.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Rideau Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Rideau Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Rideau Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep the Rideau Regional Centre open as a home for people with developmental disabilities and to maintain it as a 'centre of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I've signed that, and it is signed by over 100 residents of Ontario.

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure

that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I am sending that to the Clerk's table with page Nadia, and I'm affixing my signature in support.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we are asking that access to Velcade treatment be made available in Ontario. Ontario is the only province in Canada not currently making funding available for this drug, even though approximately 40% of people diagnosed with multiple myeloma in Canada are from Ontario;

“We, the undersigned”—I have over 1,200 signatures—“petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To provide immediate access to Velcade, while the review process continues, so that this treatment is available to patients in Ontario as it is in every other province of Canada.”

I affix my signature to this petition.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I have around 5,000 signatures here from my friend Paul Beckwith supporting insulin pump legislation. It reads:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

“Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers \$13 billion a year and increasing! It is the leading cause of death and hospitalization in Canada. Many people with diabetes cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing the disease. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood and even reuse lancets and needles. These cost-saving measures often have tumultuous and disastrous health consequences.

“Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes. We think it is in all Ontario's and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain optimum glucose control. Good blood glucose control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control.”

I'm very pleased to sign my name to this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I'm happy to present a petition to the House presented to me by Keith Tansley and Mike Pawelchuk of Community Living Mississauga:

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

This petition is signed by over 600 residents of Peel.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I have signed this also.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to introduce this petition:

“To have insulin pumps, the supplies required to maintain them and glucose test strips covered by the Ontario health insurance plan for diabetic Ontarians.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas diabetics can achieve optimal glucose control when using the insulin pump to infuse insulin around the clock; and

“Whereas diabetes is the leading cause of death and hospitalization in Canada. It costs Canadians \$13 billion

a year and it is on the rise and many people with diabetes cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing diabetes; they need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating costs as well as equal opportunity in caring for their disease; and

"Whereas good blood glucose controls, reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations, millions of dollars could be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, in support of Bill 15, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Health Insurance Act to include the provision of insulin pumps, the supplies required to maintain them and glucose test strips for all diabetics."

I am pleased to support this by signing the petition.

1510

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children with autism who have reached the age of six years are no longer being discharged from their preschool autism program; and

"Whereas these children should be getting the best special education possible in the form of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) within the school system; and

"Whereas there are approximately 700 preschool children with autism across Ontario who are required to wait indefinitely for placement in the program, and there are also countless school-age children that are not receiving the support they require in the school system; and

"Whereas this situation has an impact on the families, extended families and friends of all of these children; and

"Whereas, as stated on the Web site for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 'IBI can make a significant difference in the life of a child with autism. Its objective is to decrease the frequency of challenging behaviours, build social skills and promote language development';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of IBI for all preschool children awaiting services. We also petition the Legislature of Ontario to fund an educational program in the form of ABA in the school system."

As I am in agreement with this, I affix my signature and give it to Helen to deliver.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): This is an additional petition to the ones I've tabled with the Legislature already, and I fully support it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to partici-

pate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I sign this petition and support my local community for this particular purpose, and I give it to Richard.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to 'phase out' these double-hatter firefighters; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time."

I've affixed my signature as well.

MANDATORY RETIREMENT

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas existing legislation enforcing mandatory retirement is discriminatory; and

"Whereas it is the basic human right of Ontario citizens over the age of 65 to earn a living and contribute to society; and

"Whereas the provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Yukon and the Northwest Territories have also abolished mandatory retirement in various forms; and

"Whereas ending mandatory retirement is a viable means of boosting the Ontario labour force and accommodating the growing need for skilled workers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Ontario government should act by abolishing mandatory retirement in the province of Ontario. This is best achieved by passing Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement."

I concur with the petitioners, and I will affix my signature to it.

HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 was approved by MPP Jim Wilson and the previous PC government in 1999; and

"Whereas a number of horrific fatalities and accidents have occurred on the old stretch of Highway 26; and

"Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 is critical to economic development and job creation in Simcoe–Grey;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop the delay of the Highway 26 redevelopment and act immediately to ensure that the project is finished on schedule, to improve safety for area residents and provide economic development opportunities and job creation in Simcoe–Grey."

Of course, I agree with this petition.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers \$13 billion per year and increasing! It is the leading cause of death and hospitalization in Canada. Many people with diabetes cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing the disease. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood and even reuse lancets and needles. These cost-saving measures often have tumultuous and disastrous health consequences. Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes.

"We think it is in all Ontario's and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain optimum glucose control. Good blood glucose control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control."

I will affix my name to this petition.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I feel so privileged today. Anyway, I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the average price of gasoline has skyrocketed" to the highest prices at the pumps in Ontario's history;

"Whereas high gas prices are causing great hardship for ordinary motorists, small business owners and industry;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals promised to take action to keep gas prices low;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals have broken that promise and have done nothing to help ordinary families getting hosed at the pumps;

"I petition the Ontario government to immediately pass Bill 74, the Keep Your Promises at the Pump Act, which would make the Liberals keep their promise to freeze gas prices for 90 days, and Bill 93, the Keep Your Promise on the Gas Price Watchdog Act, which would force the Liberals to keep their promises to establish a gas price watchdog to protect consumers from price gouging."

I've signed that petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENERGY CONSERVATION RESPONSIBILITY ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ EN MATIÈRE DE CONSERVATION DE L'ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 22, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 21, An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2005 and to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Conservation Authorities Act / Projet de loi 21, Loi édictant la Loi de 2005 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et apportant des modifications à la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, à la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et à la Loi sur les offices de protection de la nature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): On the last occasion, we heard the speech of the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant. It is now time for questions and comments.

Interjection: He's still got five minutes.

The Acting Speaker: No, I do not believe so. Was there time left? No.

Questions and comments?

1520

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Of course, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk spoke eloquently about this particular bill and brought it to the attention of the House that smart meters perhaps aren't the smartest thing in the world we could do. Smart meters may not be smart. In fact, to start with, smart meters are going to cost the average householder \$8 or \$10 a month. We don't know what that amount might be. It might be as high as \$15 a month, and that's \$15 a month for as long as you pay an electrical bill. That could possibly be for the rest of your life; you're going to be paying and paying and paying.

People in Ontario are pretty much creatures of habit. They go to work in the morning. They get up at a certain time and they come home at a certain time. They have their dinner at a certain time, and when they have some free time in the evening, they do their laundry. These people, these creatures of habit, the wonderful people of Ontario who go to work, obey the law and pay their taxes, are not going to change their habits all that much. These people are the backbone of Ontario. These are good, decent, hard-working people and they're not going to change their habits all that much. And what's going to happen to them with the smart meter? When a smart meter comes in and they don't change their habits, they're going to pay more for electricity. They're going to pay a lot more for electricity.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): If they're smart, they'll read it.

Mr. Chudleigh: And the member says if they're smart, they'll change.

Interjection: No, "read it."

Mr. Chudleigh: Well, I don't know. Perhaps the member misses the point that people of Ontario who work hard, obey the law and pay their taxes should not be abused by having to pay extra for the privilege of having electricity in their homes and not changing their lives to suit the government of the day. I think the government of the day will have a rude awakening when those people have a chance to—

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I say to everyone watching, stay tuned. Howard Hampton will be up next. He's the authority when it comes to energy policy in the province of Ontario. And I'm sure that members of this assembly, Conservatives and Liberals, are going to be so happy, because Mr. Hampton has been very, very adept at pointing out that the Liberals have followed Jim Wilson's hydro policies and they really are not working.

I've got to say to my good friend Mr. Barrett, the member for—I don't know the riding and wish I could mention it by name—

The Acting Speaker: Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant.

Mr. Bisson: —Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant that I didn't get a chance to see the entire speech; I saw part of it in my office. I thought it was rather interesting, but I have to ask you the following question.

We know that hydro prices in this province have gone through the roof, and as a result of that, consumers, as far as individuals living at home, are paying more than they've ever had to pay for electricity before. God, we've got people in all of our constituencies who are really trying to do all they can to save electricity because they can't afford to buy it. So, (1) we know that consumers are being hurt, and (2) we know that industry—just today, we saw the announcement of Domtar shutting down that mill permanently in the community of Cornwall; we saw Domtar's closure in Ottawa. We saw Thunder Bay's closure. We saw the closure in Kenora. All of these are related to hydro prices.

I have to ask you, after all of this time, looking at what the effects of this policy have been to the economy of Ontario and to consumers, is the Conservative caucus prepared to repent? Are you finally prepared to say, after all these years, that, yes, Howard Hampton and the New Democrats were right, that public power is the way to go, that this sort of experiment in deregulation of the electricity market and the partial privatization of the system has been a disaster, and that finally, after all this time, you're all going to wake up and say, "Yeah, we should have listened to Howard Hampton"? I really want to hear the comments of my good friend Mr. Barrett on that one.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): In the infamous summer of 2003, the summer of the great black-out, one of the things I was concerned about personally was what I can do to save some energy. In a year when energy prices kept rising and rising, I found that by using some of the switches on my appliances that I had never even known were there, I could do such things as set the dishwasher, let it go for a two-hour or a four-hour delay and do the same thing with my dryer. I replaced incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescents. A number of years ago, I bought a programmable thermostat and cut my energy use substantially.

There are many things that people can do in their homes with the equipment they have right now that'll make a big difference on their energy prices. Even though prices may be going up, a lot of you can look at your appliances and bring your costs down.

In my own area, Enersource contacted me. In the neighbourhood of Churchill Meadows, my home is the first one in the entire neighbourhood to have a smart meter. That's going to show me, as a homeowner, what difference using energy at different times of day will make and will allow me to adjust my own usage patterns to figure out how I can minimize my costs in years to come by using electricity later in the evening, when it's cheaper, as opposed to using it during the prime hours,

when it's more expensive. The net result to me is all the same; the only difference is that I get to save money.

This is the sort of thing that most Ontarians can do, and this is part of what Bill 21 proposes: a series of common sense measures that allow people to use some of the devices available to them, some of the measures that are very cost-effective for each and every one of them and, despite the fact that electricity prices are rising all over the world, to take their costs and bring them down.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): I just want to say to my NDP colleague that if they'd followed my energy policy, we wouldn't be in this mess. We had reasonable prices. In fact, we saw prices drop dramatically when the market opened. It wasn't until we had a blackout that wasn't our fault and a very, very hot summer that we saw prices go up, which you'd expect in a market.

Having said that, my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant talked about smart meters. Smart meters eventually become dumb meters. The government says that it's \$3 to \$4 to \$5 to \$8 a month on our hydro bills that these meters are going to cost. It will likely be much more than that, because the same vendors who stood to make tens of millions of dollars by giving us all meters when I was Minister of Energy are selling you a bill of goods. The fact of the matter is that unless you buy the top-of-the-line, upgradeable smart meter for your home, which nobody can afford and very few businesses today can afford, even though there is an incentive out there for businesses to have smart meters right now, or interval meters—very few people can afford the top of the line; thousands and thousands of dollars so you can keep the software upgraded in it. Otherwise you're going to end up with a very dumb meter.

All I can say is that the people of Ontario are being completely fooled by this legislation. They're being taken down the garden path that leads to nowhere but Hades. Because the fact of the matter is that unless prices are going to be three or four times what they are today per kilowatt hour, which is running at about 13 or 14 cents as I looked on the Web this morning—if it's three or four times that, you might have an incentive to actually save a few kilowatts of power during the day, if you can run your dishwasher at the right time, or your dryer or whatever. So they must be anticipating extremely high prices; otherwise, the payback time for a smart meter is longer than the meter will last itself. There's nowhere in the world where this is working, even in England, where they did it in a great big way and the government paid for all the meters.

So I just say, you're being led down the garden path and you should listen to my colleague, who made a very good speech about this.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I want to thank the members for their comments on a speech I made a week ago Tuesday night. I reiterate that certainly we agree that conservation is important in any energy plan. Supply is crucial. We have questions about

the smart meter initiatives. I don't know whether it has really been thought out. The questions continue to be raised: How much is it going to cost? We really haven't been told that. What are the tangible benefits? Without these kinds of answers, we are concerned that—many of these consumers are having trouble meeting their electrical bills as it is.

This particular piece of legislation is a culmination of two years of announcing umpteen times over that smart meters are coming. I indicated last week that I regretted that there was no mention of net meters. There was a lot of talk about smart meters; no talk of net meters.

Hydro One has put out a document. They define net metering as “a system of measuring the energy you use against the energy you generate, resulting in a net energy total from which your bill is calculated.” Of course, this has relevance for people who have their own water power system, wind power system or solar power system. I feel that Hydro One and this particular government should be in a position to encourage people who can generate their own power to have the ability to sell it.

As of 2003, Hydro One does not pay for any excess generation. I understand a regulation is being worked on with respect to net metering. I would like to see a position where the customer receives a credit for any energy exported into the grid, and I would hope this government would move that along.

1530

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, this is my leadoff time, so I have a number of comments I want to make about this bill.

I wish I could stand here and say that this bill is somehow creating new turf, that it is a bold step forward, that it has vision to it, that it has a direction to it. But in fact when I look at this bill, it is really a bill about smart meters, with a little bit of window dressing around the side. If the government had simply introduced it as a bill to provide for the implementation of smart meters and then included the other sections as an add-on, it would be a more accurate description of what's really going on here. However, as is the habit of the McGuinty government, they are trying to spin this bill as somehow being the apple pie and ice cream of energy conservation and energy efficiency. That's the government's spin. The reality, when you read the bill, is that it is very slender and doesn't do much of anything in terms of energy efficiency or energy conservation.

Now let me just say that in contrast to this bill, which is very slender, which is at best vague, doesn't have a vision and doesn't have a direction, the real energy policy of the McGuinty government is to go nuclear and go big and go private. That's the real energy policy of this government. That's why we see a backroom energy deal with Bruce Power being signed, which, when you add in all of the loopholes and all of the fine print, ensures that the electricity that will be delivered, if it is delivered, will be very expensive electricity and is going to drive people's hydro bills ever higher.

That is the McGuinty government's real electricity policy: Go nuclear, go big and go private. Of course, they don't want to admit that to the people of Ontario. As a result, we see the slender pickings that come with this bill but lots of press releases trying to advertise this bill as something very wonderful.

It's worth noting that we're now entering the third year of the McGuinty government in a four-year mandate, so we're past the halfway point. Through the first two years and now three months, I've been looking for real energy efficiency measures. I've actually been looking for something from this government that constitutes an energy efficiency policy, that constitutes an energy conservation program, that has practical things that people can implement in their own homes, that has practical things that small businesses can implement, that has practical things that industrial operations like paper mills can implement. I've actually been looking for those things. I want to give you an example of some of the things that could be done.

If you live in the province of Quebec now or you live in the province of Manitoba, there are real, practical strategies that people can implement. For example, Manitoba Hydro has something that they call the Power Smart program. If you're a homeowner in that province and you want to get serious about energy efficiency, you can apply to the Power Smart program. They'll send out somebody who's an energy efficiency expert to do an audit of your home. They'll look at your insulation and your insulation factors; they'll look at your windows and doors, and your energy efficiency there; they'll look at your heating system; they'll look at your ventilation system—and they'll give you a report. Not only will they give you a report, but you can apply for a \$5,000 low-interest loan.

So if the audit says, "Your insulation is not up to standard and you really should look at reinsulating your home," you can take that \$5,000 loan and use it for the purpose of reinsulating your home so that you have less leakage of warm air in the winter and less concern about dealing with really hot air on the outside in the summer. You could also use that low-interest loan to put in energy-efficient windows. As we know, a triple-pane window that's an energy-efficient design will allow you to keep cold air out in the winter and hot air out in the summer, all of which will reduce your heating consumption in the winter and your air-conditioning consumption in the summer.

You can use the low-interest loan to purchase high-efficiency appliances, and that's important. For example, if you have a refrigerator that is 10 years old or older, chances are it uses three to four times the amount of electricity as an up-to-date, energy-efficient refrigerator. Of course, the refrigerator is always on. It better be always on or you shouldn't be eating the food that's stored in the refrigerator. So if you can get an energy-efficient refrigerator, you can seriously reduce your electricity bill and save electricity. In Manitoba, you can actually use the Power Smart program to get a low-interest loan to purchase that energy-efficient refrigerator

or freezer. Of course, part of the plan is that you have to turn over your old, inefficient refrigerator. You can't take it to the cottage and plug it in there or take it down to the basement and start using it as a beer fridge. The idea is to get these inefficient, older appliances out of the system. That's how you bring down electricity consumption.

That's what you could do in Manitoba, and do you know what? Manitoba doesn't have an electricity shortage; Manitoba actually has an electricity surplus. They're way ahead of the McGuinty government in Ontario.

But it's not just Manitoba. If you go to Quebec, there they call their strategy the Energy Wise strategy and it's very similar. You can have your home or your business or even a public building audited to see what you need to do to increase the energy efficiency of your building and lower your electricity or natural gas costs and your energy consumption. There, you can get an audit. It's paid for, but if the audit shows that you have an older home and the insulation is inadequate, you can get a low-interest loan to insulate your home. You can get a low-interest loan for energy-efficient windows and doors. You can get a low-interest loan to install a high-efficiency heating system. You can get a low-interest loan to purchase energy efficiency appliances. Then, whatever money you save on your electricity bill or your natural gas bill or your oil bill, you can use to pay back the low-interest loan.

The provinces to the west and east of us have actual practical strategies for people to reduce their electricity and natural gas consumption and do something good for the environment. There's even a mechanism whereby people can finance it without having to go into serious debt themselves or without having to come up with \$5,000, \$6,000 or \$7,000 cash, which many people don't have.

Is there such a strategy here in Ontario? After all the press releases of the McGuinty government, after all the photo ops, after all the media spin talking about energy efficiency and energy conservation, is there such a practical, on-the-ground strategy by the McGuinty government in Ontario? No, nothing of the sort.

1540

It's incredible. If you counted up the number of photo ops that the Premier and his ministers have held, if you counted up the number of press releases, if you counted up the number of gimmicks that they've launched, all of them talking about energy efficiency and about energy conservation, you would think that Ontario ought to have a practical, on-the-ground strategy that homeowners could use. But alas, after you cut through all the media spin, after you cut through all the photo ops and the gimmicks of the McGuinty government, there's nothing. There's nothing there for responsible people who want to reduce their electricity consumption and who want to reduce their natural gas consumption—nothing. It's all completely phony. It's all about press releases and photo ops and gimmicks in an attempt to fool people, but when somebody actually wants to do something to reduce their energy consumption, there is no program and no plan on the ground by this government.

Now, there have been lots of recommendations given to the government. I want to quote a report from the Pembina Institute and the Canadian Environmental Law Association called *Power for the Future: Towards a Sustainable Electricity System for Ontario*. When I last raised this issue, the government said, "This report is very new." Well, this report has now been around since May 2004, and it's chock full of practical things that a government could do, things that it wouldn't take you six months to implement. It wouldn't even take you six weeks to implement it. You could announce the strategy today and start implementing it next week. I want to read some of these things, because I think the average person in Ontario ought to know about them: practical things that this government could have done and should have done but has failed to do.

Let me give you one example: "The provincial building code should be amended to require R2000, Canadian building improvement program (CBIP) or equivalent energy efficiency performance for all new buildings and building renovations by 2010." It's a simple thing: Improve the building code so that these things happen. Here we are into the third year of the McGuinty government. Have they passed legislation to improve the building code? No—a simple, elementary thing like that.

It says, "The most energy-efficient technologies in all sectors and end uses should be labelled through the Energy Star program or, if not included in Energy Star, through a provincial labelling system." Is that true in Ontario? No. It's just a simple strategy of labelling, so that when people go to purchase a refrigerator, a freezer, a stove or other electrical appliances, they would know right away, "Gee, this is an energy-efficient one. This is what I should do if I care about the environment, and this is what I should do in order to reduce my electricity consumption." They haven't done that either.

Another point: "The Planning Act should be amended to permit municipalities to make energy efficiency design requirements a condition of planning and site approvals for new buildings." It doesn't say "consult." It doesn't say "maybe." It says "make energy efficiency design requirements a condition." Has this government done that? No, not at all.

It says the government should implement a demand-response incentive mechanism. Has this government done that on a province-wide basis, after entering into its third year of government? No, it hasn't done that either.

These are just practical things that would make sense in terms of the average Ontarian, in terms of helping them to reduce their electricity consumption. Three years into the McGuinty government, none of it has been done—none of it.

Just to give you an example, one area where you see just an incredible waste of electricity, and this is particularly true in southern Ontario, is in apartment buildings that were built quick and cheap in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. I've been in lots of those apartment buildings across this province. In fact, if you start in Windsor and drive up through Chatham and London on the 401, and

maybe get off on the 403 and go through Brampton, Brantford, Hamilton, Burlington and Mississauga, through Toronto, through Oshawa and into Durham, if you do that and you're counting up all the apartment buildings that were built cheap and had either no insulation or inadequate insulation, that have windows that are terribly inefficient—in fact, if you sit or stand too close to the windows in the wintertime, you're at risk of pneumonia. Because electric heat was cheap and easy to install, they installed electric heat, even though environmentalists will tell you that electric heat is so inefficient that it's like cutting butter with a chainsaw. These are terribly inefficient buildings. In the winter, again, because most of them have electric heat, these buildings guzzle electricity. If you don't have any insulation to keep the cold air out, and you have leaky windows that allow the cold air to come in, then you guzzle electricity trying to keep the place warm. So they waste electricity in winter. In summer, because there's no insulation to keep hot air out, and the windows are leaky and they allow all the hot air in, they guzzle electricity for the purposes of air conditioning.

I think that a practical, reasonable person would ask, "Gee, doesn't the government have a strategy, a program, something practical to retrofit these buildings that guzzle electricity in winter and guzzle electricity in summer?" That's a natural, reasonable question to ask. In fact, though, the answer once again is no. After all the talk, after all the photo ops, after all the media spin, after all the gimmicks from the McGuinty government, no strategy, no practical program for retrofitting all of these apartment buildings that guzzle electricity in winter and guzzle electricity in summer, no program or plan whatsoever.

Again, I want to contrast Ontario with Quebec. Quebec, which does not have an electricity shortage, which sells electricity to Ontario and sells electricity to New England and the state of New York, this summer was retrofitting dozens of apartment buildings in the city of Montreal. New insulation was being put in, better insulation was being put in, energy-efficient windows were being put in, new high-efficiency heating systems were being put in and new energy-efficient appliances were being put in, all to reduce electricity consumption in those old, badly built, electrically heated apartment buildings.

So I ask, if Quebec can do it, if Quebec is doing it now, what is wrong with the McGuinty government? What happened to the McGuinty government? The only solution I can come up with is that the McGuinty government is so impressed with their photo ops, so impressed with their gimmicks and so impressed with their media spin that they don't believe they have to do anything practical or real on the energy efficiency and energy conservation front. They believe it's simply enough to utter the promises and hold the photo ops and they believe they can fool the public of Ontario. Let me tell you that tomorrow the Pembina Institute and the Canadian Environmental Law Association are coming

out with a report which discloses just how empty, just how vacuous, just how visionless all of the McGuinty government spin about energy efficiency and energy conservation is. So I say to the McGuinty government, you can continue to hold your photo ops, you can continue to do your gimmicks, but people who know about energy efficiency and energy conservation are on to you. Pretty soon, you're going to be running and hiding on this file too. Let me say that the Pembina Institute knows that the real energy policy of this government is: go nuclear, go big and go private. That's the real energy policy of this government.

1550

I just want to let people at home know, because I think people would want to know this, that the report *Power for the Future: Towards A Sustainable Electricity System for Ontario*, I understand, is available on the Web site of the Pembina Institute for Appropriate Development, and I'm told that it's also available on the Canadian Environmental Law Association Web site. So people can go to those Web sites and actually get this report—an excellent report, very detailed and very thoughtful, and thankfully, minus the gimmicks, the photo ops and the media spin exercises of the McGuinty government.

I just wanted to deal with some of the details of Bill 21. As I said, this is a government that's had almost two and a half years now to actually do something real and practical on the energy efficiency and energy conservation front. It hasn't done anything. As I point out, the Pembina Institute report is chock full of practical ideas that have been implemented elsewhere, or are being implemented elsewhere, that lead to real, practical, beneficial results. This is a report that's been available to the McGuinty government for over the last year and a half, yet they've done nothing. The other part of this that I want to focus on is that although schedule A of Bill 21 is called the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, ironically, it fails to lead Ontario toward any meaningful reforms in terms of energy conservation and energy efficiency.

Again, I want to refer to the Pembina report. The single largest area for potential energy efficiency gains that the Pembina Institute identified was improvement to building shells—heating, ventilation and air conditioning—in the residential, commercial and institutional sector, with potential savings of 30,000 gigawatt hours per year. But this does require an updating of the Ontario building code. Does this bill require the Ontario building code to be improved and reformed? Does this bill implement these progressive changes to the Ontario building code? No, it doesn't. Even this bill doesn't do it. What Ontarians need are real reforms to the Ontario building code for new structures and for renovations that will keep the heat inside in the winter and the heat outside in the summer. Did this bill do anything for that? No.

In conjunction with Ontario building code reforms, Ontarians would benefit from being able to upgrade the energy efficiency of their homes through a program like the Power Smart residential loan program in Manitoba. Does this legislation finally provide that? No. There's

nothing here to help Ontarians upgrade their energy efficiency—not the energy efficiency of their homes, and no programs to fund the energy efficiency upgrades in multi-residential buildings and apartment buildings.

When it comes to making appliances more energy efficient, requiring a higher number of appliances to meet Energy Star standards, what does this legislation say? Nothing. Once again, the McGuinty government is missing in action on updating energy efficiency standards under the Energy Efficiency Act. Again, lots of spin, lots of photo ops, lots of gimmicks, but when you actually read the legislation, nothing again.

Why has the McGuinty government fallen down on energy conservation and efficiency? Why, into the third year of the McGuinty government, have we seen nothing that has any substance to it, nothing that will make a meaningful, practical difference? I think the problem goes back to Bill 100, the first piece of electricity legislation introduced by this government, the so-called Electricity Restructuring Act. You don't have to take my word on that; the government doesn't have to take my word on that fact. They can refer to the 2004-05 annual report of the government's own Environmental Commissioner. This is what he says: "For conservation to predominate, the Ontario Power Authority should be structured to report to the Chief Energy Conservation Officer, rather than vice versa." It says, "Also concerning conservation, the Electricity Restructuring Act amendments were structured to allow, but not require, that transmitters and distributors offer energy conservation services. Strong legislation or financial incentives are needed to bring about energy conservation." That's what the Environmental Commissioner said.

I look at this act. Does it establish the energy conservation officer as the driving force? No. This act continues the same bad direction that was put in place under the Electricity Restructuring Act. The so-called conservation officer is merely a minion in the Ontario Power Authority. The Ontario Power Authority is out there going nuclear, going big and going expensive. The Ontario Power Authority is out there signing natural gas contracts that are also going to be big and expensive. The Ontario Power Authority is out there talking about purchasing this power and purchasing that power, and their conservation officer is just a minion. That's why I say that the real energy policy of the McGuinty government isn't about conservation and energy efficiency, it is about go nuclear, go big and go private, and the energy conservation officer is just a mere minion in that empire.

Are there incentives? Are there the kinds of incentives that the Environmental Commissioner calls for, incentives for people to get a low-interest loan so they can properly insulate their home, financial incentives so people can get a low-interest loan to put in those energy-efficient windows? Is there a financial incentive so that somebody can take out that inefficient electric heat that they've got and put in very high-efficiency natural gas? Is any of that included in this bill? No, none. Even the things that the Environmental Commissioner called for are not part of this bill.

What's in this bill? What's it really all about? As I said, it's really about so-called smart meters. That's the only place where there's some kind of financial incentive: around smart meters. What it says is that you'll pay for the smart meter on your hydro bill over a number of months and a number of years. But that then brings into question the debate: How effective are smart meters? I remember when the government first started promoting it, they said, "Oh, you know, it's effective in India and it's effective in China." Well, we've done a little checking, and there's no such thing. Once again, the McGuinty government: long on rhetoric, nothing on delivery.

We checked in California, because California actually did some pilot projects on smart meters. California, after they had been taken advantage of by Enron and the Enron clones, implemented a pilot project with smart meters. They estimated at the time—they were hoping at the time—that smart meters would allow them to reduce electricity consumption by about 500 megawatts. Three years later, when they did an audit, do you know what they found? Smart meters only reduced consumption by about 31 megawatts. In other words, the smart meters were very expensive, and what they got in terms of actual practical results that reduce electricity consumption was very disappointing. We actually have to have a real debate about these smart meters.

1600

I just want to point out to people at home where I think the fallacy is. The McGuinty government is saying, "You know what? Putting these smart meters in place and charging people very high prices for the use electricity during the day and lower prices for the use of electricity at night is really going to make a difference in consumption."

I'm probably like most other working people in this province. I'm out of the house by about 8 o'clock in the morning, before peak electricity usage hits. What little breakfast we cook, what little use of electrical appliances in the morning, we actually use before peak time, and then we come here to work. I have very little control over electricity usage in this building—very little control over it. I may use my computer. But the fact that the heating system here is terribly inefficient, I don't have much control over that. The fact that the electrical system is ancient, I don't have much control over that. The fact that the insulation system is terrible, I don't have any control over that. The fact that the windows are terribly inefficient, I don't have any control over that. So that smart meter that's going to be installed in my house isn't going to make a lot of difference in terms of the morning or what happens during the day.

Like a lot of working families, when the member for Nickel Belt and I go home in the evening, by the time you get home, get the kids settled, I expect you're looking at, gee, 6:30 in the evening and peak electricity usage is already coming down then. You eat your supper, you get the homework done with the kids, you get the kids put to bed, and it's then you start thinking you better wash the dishes, do the laundry, do some of these things,

but by then peak electricity usage has already passed. So I already do things.

Most working Ontarians, in terms of their working lives, in terms of how much electricity they use in their homes, are already using most of their electricity at non-peak hours. So from the perspective of the average working person in Ontario, I don't think this is going to make a big difference in terms of reducing electricity consumption. But I will tell you this: It will certainly drive up the hydro bill and it will drive up the hydro bill substantially, not only because you have to pay for these so-called smart meters, but something the government isn't admitting is that not only will you have to have smart meters but you're going to have to have the information technology networks installed to support smart meters. That's going to be very expensive, and that will also fall on the hydro bill. So just the smart meter concept is going to be very expensive for people, yet, as they showed in California, the delivered results are very disappointing.

But even more so, if the problem in most homes, most apartment buildings and most commercial buildings in southern Ontario is that they were built cheap and quick, with not enough insulation, a lack of energy efficient windows and doors and inefficient electric heat, smart meters aren't going to do anything about that. Once again, the McGuinty government will be trying to address a structural problem with another gimmick. The gimmick, in this case, is called a smart meter, but what really needs to happen is a massive retrofit strategy.

What I had hoped we would be debating here today, what I had hoped we would see was a practical, on-the-ground strategy which would show how the government was going to elicit pension funds like the teachers' pension fund, the hydro employees' pension fund or the hospital workers' pension fund; how the government was going to provide a financial guarantee for those pension funds to come in and loan their money to homeowners and apartment owners and municipalities and commercial building owners so they could do those retrofits. Then, having done the retrofits and lowered their natural gas bills and electricity bills substantially, they would pay that loan back over six, seven or eight years. That would supply an income stream for the pension funds. They would be happy. Consumers would be happy because they would actually be using less electricity, less natural gas and less heating oil all day. The environment would be happy because we wouldn't be building more of those big, expensive nuclear plants with their nuclear waste that's very toxic and has to be stored for thousands of years.

That's what I hoped we'd be debating here, but instead, what we get from the McGuinty government, once again, is another gimmick.

I want to go on just a bit further. There is another problem with smart meters, and I want to cite the practical example of the city of London. London, in southwestern Ontario has pointed out that the government's plan for smart meters will actually increase costs

significantly for that municipality. In London, as in many other municipalities, the electricity meter reader who is there now doesn't just read the electricity meter; he or she also reads the water meter. So if the city of London now has to take over reading 93,500 water meters because the McGuinty government has come up with this not-so-smart idea of smart meters for electricity, the cost to London is \$6 million—double the \$3 million it currently spends. How much is an additional \$3 million for them? It's almost 1% of their tax rate, and a very significant amount of money for the city and for the property taxpayers in the city.

What London is really saying is, "You know what? We don't think the McGuinty government has thought out all the implications of these so-called smart meters. We don't think the McGuinty government has done the a, b, c, d, e, f, g of looking at all the implications and all the costs." They are saying, "What is the benefit? Consumers are going to be paying \$6, \$7, \$8 a month more on their hydro bill for years for these smart meters, and we, the city, are going to be paying out \$3 million more. Where is the return? Where is the sense in this?" That's the problem. That's the issue here.

I want to read some of the technical aspects of the bill. Schedule A, the so-called Energy Conservation Leadership Act—I've already said that it's very vague and that there's no leadership and no vision. It doesn't require that barriers to energy conservation—goods, services and technologies—be removed; it says the government may remove them. It doesn't require that there be a full-fledged plan for energy conservation put in place by municipalities and other public bodies; it basically says they may or they may not. I think that is part of the problem here. There is no real plan. It is very much a lot of public relations fluff, with no clear direction, no clear program, no strategy for implementation, no incentives, none of the things that have worked successfully elsewhere.

I just want to go back to the strategy I was outlining earlier, where I pointed out that what we should be debating here today is an actual practical plan whereby the government would put in place, through using pension funds and other resources, a fund that would finance energy efficiency for people in their homes, apartment buildings, schools, hospitals, hockey rinks, swimming pools, auditoriums, commercial buildings. There ought to be a fund established and there ought to be practical mechanisms whereby the average person can access that fund, know how much they're going to save in terms of energy consumption, know how much they're going to save on their hydro bill and their natural gas bill or their heating oil bill, know how much they'll have to pay on their hydro bill, and for how long, in order to pay back the incentive. That's what I was really hoping we'd see. But again, no plan.

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What I was also hoping to see was a practical plan by the government to ensure that we have enough plumbers, enough insulation experts, enough carpenters and enough

electricians in place to start to do this work. I was hoping that we would actually see the beginning of the targeting of these kinds of energy efficiency strategies, because the kinds of energy efficiency strategies I'm talking about you can actually target around the province. So if it's Toronto that you are worried about, or the greater Toronto area, which apparently doesn't have enough electricity going forward to avoid the threat of chronic brownouts or blackouts, that's where you would target your energy efficiency strategy first. That's where you would target your loans. That's where you would target your workforce. That's where you would target your financing mechanism. I was really hoping that we'd be getting down to that kind of nuts-and-bolts debate and discussion here. But again, gimmicks; again, photo ops; again, more media spin—but no substance.

I'm beginning to think that when someone writes the history of the McGuinty government, maybe a very short-lived history, it will be, "This is a story about a government that held lots of photo ops, held lots of press conferences, had all kinds of gimmicks, made all kinds of promises, but when it came the day when delivery was supposed to happen, nothing was there. The promises were broken, the gimmicks were just that, the media spin was empty and the photo ops were phony." That's where I think we're headed on this.

So I would urge the government: You are now into the third year of your mandate. It's time to put some meat on the bones. It's time not only to have legislation but to have meaningful legislation with implementation strategies, with practical programs, financing, incentive, rules and criteria so that people know what they're dealing with. It's not happening.

Just for a minute, I want to address the issue of industrial energy efficiency, because there are big opportunities here in terms of industrial energy efficiency. One of the things the government has tried to say—they've come up with a forest sector competitiveness strategy. It's bizarre, because since the government first announced it—they announced a dribble of it in June, and everyone in the forest sector laughed and said, "No, no. Your offer of loan guarantees doesn't interest us. We already have debt levels, and your telling us you will help us to take on more debt is a non-starter." In fact, people in the forest sector actually laughed when they heard that. Then later on, in September, after the first piece was a failure, the government added the fancy name of forest sector competitiveness strategy, and said, "There's going to be money here to do this and do that, and there's going to be a plan for industrial cogeneration."

Let me tell you where that's at. The government said in February 2005—we're almost into February 2006—that they were going to name and provide the funding for an office of the cogeneration facilitator and that this person would be someone like the energy conservation commissioner. That was the promise they made last February. So here we are now, into December of 2005, and do we have a cogeneration facilitator? No? Do we have an office of the cogeneration facilitator? No.

Forest companies who are worried about sustaining hundreds of millions of dollars of investment that they've made in their plants, who are worried about sustaining 700 or 800 workers in their mill and whole communities, have come forward to the government and said, "OK, you want to talk about biomass; you want to talk about using wood waste," and they've asked practical questions. You see, forest companies—most of the timber comes from crown land—pay stumpage fees in order to access that timber. They've asked the government a very practical question. They've said, "We pay stumpage fees. Do our stumpage fees include the wood waste?" For a long time, they couldn't get an answer on that. They couldn't get an answer to an elementary question. You've got ministers out there boasting about biomass, and the Minister of Energy is out there boasting about a cogeneration facilitator. You'd think that, before they went out there and made these announcements, they would have thought about that elementary thing. But companies couldn't get an answer. That's very important. If you're already paying \$40 million or \$50 million for the timber that is usable as wood fibre and you have to pay another \$10 million or \$20 million for the branches and the tops of trees, otherwise known as wood waste, then boy, that starts to make cogeneration expensive.

They asked another question. They asked the government, "If it's not included, if we have to pay additional stumpage fees to get the waste wood, do we have a prior claim on it? Because we're managing the forest and we've already paid the stumpage fees for the usable timber, do we have first priority on the wood waste?" It would help too, if they knew they had first priority, because they would then be able to do some planning. They asked that question; they asked it over and over. Despite all the government's announcements and press releases and media hype, they couldn't get an answer on that one either.

These are companies that can't afford to purchase electricity in Ontario any more because the McGuinty government has driven the price of electricity so high. They're looking at ways for cogeneration. They are promised a cogeneration facilitator; that doesn't happen. They ask some very elementary questions about wood waste; the government can't answer them.

Of course, one of the things they're worried about is this: If the wood waste is there for everybody to bid on, and company A wants it, company B wants it and company C wants it and nobody has priority, you can see very quickly how even wood waste, wood that's left in the bush, can be bid up very high in price and can then become too expensive.

Why do I raise these issues? Because forest companies are coming to me, saying, "We have to make decisions here. We've got decisions that will cost us \$100 million, \$150 million, \$200 million, which means the difference between 800 people having a job and 800 people not having a job, which means the difference between a community having an economy and not having an economy, and we can't get answers from the McGuinty govern-

ment, which has been out there promising a cogeneration facilitator, promising a cogeneration strategy, telling us that biomass is the way to go. We can't get any practical answers that would allow us to plan."

I say, where's the McGuinty government's plan for industrial cogeneration? The answer: Nobody knows. The cogeneration facilitator that was promised in February: He or she doesn't exist. The practical rules on biomass, wood waste: That doesn't exist. The issue of how all this is going to go; is there going to be a transition—let me tell you what's important about transition. The interesting thing about this government and its cogeneration strategy is, it's not much different from the cogeneration strategy that surfaced under the previous Peterson government. The Peterson government went to paper mills and pulp mills and said, "Build natural gas plants as part of your paper mills. You can use some of the natural gas, burn natural gas, to produce electricity, but you can also use it to produce steam for your mill, and steam is used for drying the paper." Companies bought into this. Some of them built fairly hefty natural gas plants.

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But now the electricity is too expensive for these mills to purchase. We saw that today in Cornwall with the announcement of the layoff of another 500 workers; we saw it in Ottawa with the announcement of the layoff of 200 workers; we saw it two weeks ago at Cascades in Thunder Bay with the announcement of a total of 525 workers laid off; we saw it at Norampac in Red Rock with the announcement of over 200 workers laid off; and we saw it in Dryden with the announcement of 40 workers laid off.

Electricity is now too expensive under the McGuinty policy of driving electricity through the roof, in terms of price, so they can't afford to buy electricity to run their mills. They're interested in looking at cogeneration. But some of these mills that have been using natural gas need a transition strategy, where they can continue to use natural gas while they build a setup that will burn bark and wood waste. They've gone to the McGuinty government, saying, "Will you negotiate a power purchase agreement with us so that we can continue to run the natural gas cogen for a couple of years while we build the new wood waste burner?"

You would think that a government that's out there with lots of gimmicks and lots of media spin promoting wood waste would have thought that through. But do you know what companies have found when they've come to talk to the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Natural Resources about that issue? What they've found is that the Minister of Energy looks at them and says, "Oh, I never thought of that," and the Minister of Natural Resources looks at them and says, "Oh, I never thought of that," and then they go to the Premier's office to talk to the officials on high and they run into a bunch of people there who say, "Oh, I never thought of that."

What's clear is that on this front as well there isn't a plan, there isn't a strategy, so we see mill after mill an-

nouncing that they're closing, laying off thousands of workers, taking hundreds of millions of dollars of economic activity out of communities that in many cases are one-industry towns. Where's the industrial cogeneration strategy? It isn't there.

What's the net result for industry? The net result is this: We're losing tens of thousands of good-paying manufacturing jobs. Not only does the McGuinty government not have anything to help these companies and communities, but the McGuinty government is the source of the problem. The McGuinty government is making the otherwise difficult business challenges, the economic challenges of these companies—these paper mills, pulp mills, factories—more difficult.

That's where we're at. I was hoping that here, today, we would see the nuts, the bolts, the meat in the sandwich, the body of an industrial energy efficiency strategy. I was hoping we would see the nuts and bolts of an industrial cogeneration strategy. Nothing. People who know far more about it than I do, who ask the practical questions, get nothing as well.

I thought we would see an energy efficiency strategy for all those huge office towers down on Bay Street that often leave their lights on all day long and all night long, no matter how sunny it is or how dark it is at night, when you don't need the lights on. Do I hear a strategy? Nothing. I thought we would see and hear an energy efficiency strategy for the tens of thousands of hockey rinks across Ontario that, frankly, use a lot of electricity. Anything here? Nothing. What about the thousands of swimming pools and community auditoriums? Anything here? Nothing.

We are into the third year of the McGuinty government. Provinces and states all around us have industrial cogeneration strategies and industrial energy efficiency strategies. They have commercial energy efficiency strategies. They have institutional energy efficiency strategies. They have multi-residential energy efficiency strategies. They have residential energy efficiency and conservation strategies. They have practical things that people can do. They have loan funds and incentive funds. They have collected the workforce necessary to implement this. All of this is happening around Ontario as we speak, and what's the McGuinty government doing? Holding more photo ops, more gimmicks, more press conferences that are empty, more promises that are never fulfilled. That's what's happening under the McGuinty government.

I say to the backbenchers—and there are a few of them here—you should be raising this. You should be raising this with the Minister of Energy. You should be raising it with the Minister of the Environment. Time is starting to run short. People are losing their jobs. People can't pay their hydro bill. You still don't have an effective strategy to keep the lights on. That's becoming more evident every day. You should be raising these questions with your ministers. You should be saying to them, "What's the plan? What's the implementation strategy? Where's the financing? Where's the incentive fund? Where's the program to let people know and help them get involved?"

Time's running short, folks, and this is going to become more critical. We have a cold winter; this will be a problem. We have another hot summer; this will be a big problem. Time's running out. Where's the effective energy efficiency strategy? Where's the conservation strategy? You sure don't see it in this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): We are dealing today with only one very small portion of a very comprehensive plan that the government has brought forward in the last couple of years, and it is the most comprehensive plan we have seen from a government in the last 50 years. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker? If previous governments had done just a small portion of what we are doing today, we wouldn't be in the situation that we are today. With all due respect to the member from Kenora—Rainy River, who says, "What?" and "Where?"—it's funny, because he spent one hour speaking on exactly some of the things that this government is doing now.

This particular bill which we are debating is the Energy Conservation Leadership Act. It's only a very small part of trying to control the cost, the affordability and the provision of energy here in Ontario. Had not only the previous Conservative government but also the former NDP government signed a contract with the Manitobans—that was 15 years ago, by the way—today we would have saved hundreds of millions of dollars in energy costs, if they had had the foresight to sign that particular contract instead of cancelling it. Today we are picking up the pieces from the former governments and doing what we are supposed to do.

Instead, in the past, they had the idea of "Switch on now and pay later." For 40 years we have been paying, and now we are paying for their mistakes. This government, for the first time, not only has this wonderful energy conservation program, but also is providing energy that is clean and sufficient for the people and the consumers in Ontario.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I welcome the opportunity to make a few brief comments.

I think it's important for people to understand that smart meters in fact could be really dumb meters. We've looked at and talked about the fact that each of these meters is going to cost an individual resident approximately \$8 a month. The way in which they have been promoted is that there are changes during the 24-hour cycle in the demand for electric power, and you will be able to tell what that demand is during that 24-hour cycle. The assumption is that you're going to not only pay for the smart meter, but you're also going to buy appliances that will have the ability to go on during the periods of less demand. It would be in that period of less demand that you would then be able to create some efficiencies.

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There are a couple of things left out of that explanation. One is, of course, that household use represents about one third of the power use of the province. Even if we were all to make these kinds of investments and assume some nocturnal habits, we'd still be looking at

the potential for a relatively small part of the whole electrical demand. The other thing is that the question of price is dependent entirely on demand. If we were to change the time at which demand grew greater, obviously, the price would go up at the same time. So I think you can tell with very little examination of this that they really are dumb meters.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's a delight for me to get a few comments on the record after listening very carefully to the leader of the New Democratic Party, the member from Kenora-Rainy River. I do note that when he was the right-hand man in the government of Mr. Rae from 1990-95, electricity rates went up by some 40%. Other NDP cancellations during that august period of time: Manitoba, 1,250 megawatts of power; Mattagami, 384 megawatts of power; and the Beck tunnel, 200 megawatts of power. I look forward to being back in Peterborough tomorrow, when I meet my good friends at the CAW who work at the GE nuclear products division in Peterborough, Ontario—500 employees making \$27.50 per hour. I'll tell them clearly where the NDP would have the fate of those jobs resting.

Just a couple of comments from the Ontario Energy Association, with the introduction of Bill 21: "The legislation proposes to remove barriers and take advantage of opportunities for conservation and energy efficiency, and highlights an important leadership role for public sector organizations. The legislation also provides the framework for the implementation of smart meter technology across the province.... By committing to install smart meters in 800,000 homes by 2007, the government is providing consumers with the necessary tools to respond to the changing energy-cost environment."

The North American Insulation Manufacturers Association: "North American Insulation Manufacturers Association Canada is supportive of the Ontario government's progressive measures to make energy conservation a top priority. Energy efficiency initiatives such as increased levels of insulations through enhanced building codes and home energy labelling are critical steps that need to be taken in order to protect our finite and valuable resources. There is no doubt that energy conservation remains one of Ontario's greatest untapped and readily available resources in our ongoing efforts to protect our environment for future generations."

That's what Bill 21 is all about.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I recall my friend Bud Wildman, the former member for Algoma, on occasion would rise in this House and say, "I've been here a long time." I remember that vividly. I have to start my remarks, unfortunately, by saying that I've been here for a long time, and I remember when I was first elected to the Legislature in 1990. The first bill that I participated in a committee on in terms of extensive public hearings was Bill 118, the amendments to the Power Corporation Act. I know the member for Kenora-Rainy River will remember that piece of legislation. That was a very significant undertaking by the New Democratic Party government at that time. I recall some of the provisions of it.

I recall the New Democrats coming to office in 1990, and one of the first energy issues they were faced with was the 25-year demand-supply plan that the outgoing Liberal government had left behind. I believe it recommended the building of a significant number of nuclear generating facilities. Of course, that was dead on arrival with the new government. They felt that that was not necessarily in the public interest. We went into a recession shortly thereafter, and the demand-supply projections that Ontario Hydro had brought forward at that time were—because of the downturn in the economy, the electricity was not needed. So the new generating capacity was not built. I think today, 15 years later, that unfortunately we are still paying the price for the fact that sufficient generating capacity was not built in the early 1990s while the New Democrats were in office.

I also recall Brian Charlton, the MPP for one of the Hamilton ridings, after he was re-elected to the Legislature in 1990, talking about expensive demand-shifting programs like free refrigerators and some of these things. I know that the New Democrats wanted to bring in extensive programs to reduce electricity demand but were unsuccessful in doing so.

The Acting Speaker: The leader of the third party has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Hampton: I'm pleased to be able to respond to some folks here. First of all, I just want to remind Liberals—and it's very painful for Liberals to be reminded of this—that they were the people who told Ontarians that Darlington nuclear station was only going to cost about \$4.7 billion to build. It was built on your watch, and when the bill came in, it was \$15 billion—not a cost overrun of 100%, not a cost overrun of double, but a cost overrun of three times. And do you know what? Because you didn't exercise control over Darlington, it resulted in an increase in electricity rates of 40%. That was your doing. They were the Peterson Liberals, and some of them are still here. You saddled the people of Ontario with a 40% increase in their hydro bill in the early 1990s because you didn't exercise control over the cost of building Darlington.

I just want to say something about energy efficiency. It's interesting to read Hansard. When the NDP government wanted to implement energy-efficiency strategies in 1992 and 1993, do you know who was the most strident opponent? He used to say, "Ontario can't afford energy efficiency. Ontario can't afford energy conservation." Do you know who that was? Some guy named Dalton McGuinty said, "Ontario can't afford energy efficiency. Ontario can't afford energy conservation." So I say to the Liberal members here, go back and read your own Hansards. It's not very flattering.

Let me say this to my Conservative friend: In the early 1990s, when we suspended the nuclear plan, we had supply of 30,000 megawatts and demand not even equalling 20,000 megawatts. We were drowning in electricity supply. You guys should have implemented energy efficiency when you came to power.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa—Orléans): I have to start off by saying that I haven't been here a long time, but I think we've just heard history being rewritten on who caused the high energy prices during the third party's reign.

I'm pleased to stand here today and speak to this extremely important bill, An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2005 and to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Conservation Authorities Act. This is really important legislation, and it's enabling legislation. It will let us do a lot of things.

Before I get into a discussion of the bill, I'd just like to talk about what's going on in Montreal today. We had the third day of the climate change conference, an extremely important event for Canada, for the world, and obviously for our children, with over 10,000 delegates in Montreal from 180 countries. This conference is very important. It's unfortunate that two parties in the federal government weren't there to allow it go ahead and have an election later on in the year. Our political scene in Ottawa has overtaken the media. As a result, I read the Globe and Mail this morning and there wasn't one mention of this great conference.

Meeting the Kyoto objectives will be assisted significantly by the McGuinty government's decision to close our coal-fired generation. I'd just like to mention how great a decision this is. These are real emission reductions, within the Kyoto commitment. Our province produces 40% of the country's gross domestic product and only 28% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions. Yet Ontario is making the big commitment to replacing coal with clean and renewable fuels, and they will reduce emissions 30 megatonnes, which represents more than 10% of Canada's overall Kyoto targets.

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It's so important. I know the other parties in this House have not supported the discontinuation of the coal generation in our province, but it's so important to Ontarians, it's so important to Canadians. It's so important to show that leadership in North America, where another country is not showing that leadership. Ontario is, and I'm very proud of our government's decision—10% of our Kyoto objectives in just one move. This was a courageous move by our government and the right decision.

One of the very important things that we've done as a government: We've appointed Ontario's first Chief Energy Conservation Officer, Peter Love. I had the privilege of meeting him on Monday. I'm very impressed with his background, I'm impressed with his ideas and I'm impressed with his leadership. We're going to see that that move alone is going to take us down the road a long way in advancing conservation in Ontario.

Our conservation challenge reflects the important goal of building and supporting a conservation culture in all sections of Ontario's economy, and a cornerstone of Ontario's long-term electricity future. Ontario has set the target to reduce peak electricity by 5% by 2007, and we

will do that. Peter Love, our Chief Energy Conservation Officer, has thrown out the challenge for us to reduce our energy consumption by 10% as individuals. That challenge is something that all Ontarians, I'm sure, will be picking up.

I read the Toronto Star this morning, and David Olive has written this: "Energy policy: Canadians are energy hogs, leading most lists of per capita energy consumption among industrial nations." Those aren't my words; that's what is being said in the press. It does reflect that we are a northern country, but I also think it reflects that we have not been doing as much as we can for conservation.

This legislation, which is enabling legislation, will help us put in place many things. It will decrease energy. One of the most important: It will provide the Minister of Energy with regulatory authority to wipe out barriers to enable conservation. Just a few of these possibilities: simple things like wiping out the prohibition against clotheslines in new subdivisions. That's a small thing—but very large things, far-reaching things, like requiring all homes to have an EnerGuide rating upon sale. That is major. That means that when you go to buy a car, it will tell you how many litres per 100 kilometres that this car will use, so you know whether you're getting a gas guzzler or an efficient car. That will be the same for housing, and that will be very important. When people buy a house, 10 or 20 times as much as a car don't know, down the road, what the energy costs are going to be. This legislation will permit us to put in place requirements that when you buy a new home, you know whether you're buying something that is very inefficient or something that is a real conservation home. That is very important to us.

We have in Ontario and through the rest of the country many homes that were built in the last 30 years. New ones are much more energy efficient than the old ones, of course. It just shows what you can do with the old homes. This comes out of, again, the conservation leader that we have put in place: 28% of the heat loss in a home is from ventilation, but if we increase the airtightness, we can save 10% on that. Windows—26% of the heat loss; we can bring that down by 7%, so it will be a 19% loss. Basements—24%; it's getting to be more important to cover the basements in the summertime. Of course, the basements may provide some cooling. Main walls—17% of the loss; the energy savings on that could be 6%. Ceilings—5%; we could take that down by 2%. Overall, 40% of the energy costs of running a home could be saved through proper technology and more efficient homes. That's one of the directions we can go in and that's the direction we are going to go in. When you are buying a home, you are going to know the EnerGuide rating and you're going to be able to make your decision on not only your costs today but your costs going forward, which is extremely important.

Smart metering will bring our energy system into the 21st century. We heard from the leader of the third party that smart metering wasn't the way to go. But it will allow us to see what energy we are using. It will allow us

to make those decisions and, with the new appliances, to put off the use of those appliances until the off-peak hours. So reducing that peak is going to be extremely important, and the costs of those meters are going to come back to us many times.

The enabling legislation is going to let us do many things, but I think one of the most important will be establishing the requirement that persons selling or leasing a home provide prospective purchasers or lessees with information related to the property's energy use. We have not had that in the past, and that is extremely important.

So in many ways this has taken us that step forward. It's not the end of the line, because the building code is going to be modified in order to reach those objectives we have for energy conservation. As we go ahead with the different steps that we've seen in the past, our government is taking this province forward, taking the people forward, with the support of people, to plan for the future, to reduce energy use, to meet our objectives for Kyoto. Fifty per cent of energy savings that we can do as a people relate to our buildings; fifty per cent of our energy objectives for Kyoto relate to our buildings. So we have to have better buildings, and our building code can be modified to do that.

I'm very pleased to see this legislation going forward. I think it's the right legislation, it's the right vision that we have for energy conservation in this province, and I'm very pleased to support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak in support of the bill, because Bill 21 on conservation is a very important bill in order to create a culture which we are missing in this province.

I was listening to the third party leader talking about his initiatives and criticizing this bill. I was wondering, when he was in government, what he implemented, what he was talking about. I guess he was missing in action.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): He bought a rain forest in Puerto Rico. That's all he did.

Mr. Ramal: That's what he did. I read his book; there are a lot of good things in that book, but nothing was implemented.

Also, I was listening to the honourable member from the Conservative Party when she was talking about dumb smart meters instead of smart meters. I don't know why she has a lot of opposition to that technology, the smart technology which is going to be implemented in Ontario. When we talk about a smart meter, it's a very important initiative. The meter we have right now installed in Ontario is technology which is 100 years of age. We have to update ourselves. We have to go with the technology, because it is very important. I believe our minister and our government are on track in order to create that culture of conservation, because it is needed badly.

I listened to the member from Waterloo-Wellington when he was talking about when he was first elected to

government. He outlined his position very, very well. The Leader of the Opposition, the government of Ontario back then—how much they talked about conservation, how much they talked about Hydro, and never implemented anything.

It's about time that we create that culture. It's about time that we have a government and a minister committed to the future of this province. That's why I'm supporting this bill, and I hope everyone in this House goes with the technology, invests more in the future of this province, because it's very important.

1650

Mr. Barrett: I find it a little agonizing watching this government attempting to wrestle with a dwindling supply of energy, of expensive energy, the only jurisdiction in North America that is actually reducing the supply of electricity in its jurisdiction. As I watch this government twisting in the wind, if you will, I question whether they understand the connection. They talk about the connection of energy supply going hand in hand with conservation, but I really wonder if they understand in a very practical way what conservation is all about.

Greenpeace Canada's energy coordinator, David Martin, highlights similar concerns, and I quote: "Smart meters are not a substitute for real conservation programs."

I should talk about one real conservation program, a program that was supported by the previous government, and that was the Energy Star program. We launched what was referred to as the Energy Star rebate program in Ontario in November 2002. This was part of a very practical, common sense approach to assist people to lower their hydro bills. There was an 8% PST rebate for all Energy Star appliances. That would be dishwashers, clothes dryers, refrigerators and freezers. I bought a new freezer at that time and I did not have to pay that 8% PST. When you use an Energy Star qualified appliance—dishwasher or freezer—an average consumer would accrue a saving of \$165 a year. That's conservation.

Mr. Bisson: I just find it so interesting that my good friend the member from Ottawa-Orléans took exception to the speech made by my leader, Howard Hampton, the leader of the New Democratic Party. Everybody knows that when it comes to energy issues Howard is the authority. He's the guy, quite frankly, who has it figured out. You listen to the media scrums out there. Whenever there's an issue having to do with hydro, they go to Howard. Why? Because he knows what he is talking about.

I find it so funny that a Liberal caucus with a big majority is afraid of little old us. Like, we're only seven right now. We've got to have a by-election to get another member over here, and they're worried about what Howard Hampton has to say about energy. When you see people starting to throw rocks the other way, it normally means they're kind of worried about something, and I think that's rather interesting.

As my leader, Howard Hampton, said, the reality is that there are some things this government could be

doing right away, quite easily, to move on energy efficiency. Granted, there's some stuff they're going to do that, with time, is probably going to result in a positive direction on the energy conservation side, but the point Howard was making was simply this: There are things this government could be doing that would be very inexpensive, that they would be able to do now to put Ontario on the right track when it comes to energy conservation.

He talked about the whole issue of the building code and making sure the building code is updated.

Mr. Patten: That's next.

Mr. Bisson: The government member says, "That's next week." You've been here for almost three years now. It's like, my God, that's not a very complicated thing to do. You take a look—

Interjections.

Mr. Bisson: Well, two and a half years. You take a look at all the apartment buildings and all the office buildings built here in the city of Toronto and a lot of them are very poorly insulated, and there are a number of things that can be done that would lead to efficiency and being able to save electricity, which would take some of the pressure off that we have on the supply side.

I find it rather interesting. I look forward to more Liberal comments about my wonderful leader, Howard Hampton.

Mr. Leal: I listened carefully to the very articulate comments by the member from Ottawa–Orléans. There's a gentleman who put the case extremely well—

Interjection: He's been around a long time.

Mr. Leal: And he will be around for a long time. I hope the good citizens of Ottawa and Peterborough were tuned in when the member from Ottawa–Orléans was delivering his speech about what Bill 21 is all about and the building blocks of Bill 21. He talked extremely well about building a conservation culture in Ontario, something I believe Ontarians will be picking up on as we move forward. He talked about the benefits of smart metering, where you invest a dollar in a smart meter and get \$1.50 in return. He talked about the great work that Peter Love is instituting as the new conservation czar for the province of Ontario, and his good work that will result in the reduction of electricity use in Ontario.

My friend from Ottawa–Orléans also noted that if everybody in Ontario took their old light bulbs out and installed the new, compact fluorescent bulbs, that would save one coal plant in Ontario. Those are the kinds of key initiatives that this bill is all about. I couldn't think of a better man, a professional engineer, a guy who knows the facts about conservation, the facts about generating electricity in Ontario: my friend and colleague from Ottawa–Orléans.

When I listened to the member from Kenora–Rainy River, the only thing I heard was that those 500 people who work at the GE nuclear products division in Peterborough, those CAW workers who now earn \$27.50 with benefits, and there's also a plant in my friend's riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—that he would get rid of

all those workers in Ontario: gone with the stroke of a pen because he doesn't support those kind of things.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Ottawa–Orléans has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. McNeely: I'd like to thank the member from London–Fanshawe and the member from Halton. The member from Timmins–James Bay may have made the best pitch yet for getting into the front seat here beside me; we don't quite know that yet. And I thank the member from Peterborough very much for all those nice words.

We heard today about all the evils of getting rid of the coal-generated energy in our province, and that neanderthal thinking—I just refer to those eight or 10 years that that party was in power as the era of the lost generation, and I think they're still there now. They're not with it today. We must move forward and plan for the future. This bill has all the ingredients to—

Interjection.

Mr. McNeely: It's two years, sir; we've been in power for two years. But these steps have to be taken at the right pace. This is enabling legislation that lets a lot more things be done.

I was very encouraged by what I heard when I spoke to Mr. Love, when I spoke to the Minister of Energy and when I spoke to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: that we are moving in the right direction. The building code is the next stage to implement some of the things we want to do. We're going to get this province on the right track. We are in a much better position than we were two years ago. We can't do anything that we were left with: no investment in energy generation for seven or eight years by the former government. We're taking over, we're getting that generation in place, and this province will be much better because we have legislation that points us in the right direction. We're going to know how to save. Ontarians are going to get behind us. Ontarians are going to make sure that they achieve a 10% energy reduction, and they'll be able to do that because they'll know how their energy is being used: We'll have smart meters in our homes.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I am pleased to speak to Bill 21; my first opportunity to do a one-hour leadoff. I stood down my lead last week because I was up visiting Atikokan and Thunder Bay, and I'll touch on that a little later.

Mr. Patten: Don't drink too much water.

Mr. Yakabuski: OK. That's a good idea. You don't know what I've got installed in my plumbing system, though, Richard. Don't worry about it.

This bill is entitled An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2005 and to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Conservation Authorities Act. The big story around this bill is conservation. I don't think that the minister has self-titled—I wouldn't say she's that vain—but she somehow has gained the title as the queen of conservation. She feels very good about this bill that she

has brought forward and wants to get it passed through the House as soon as possible. But in the bill itself, of course, there is almost nothing. The bill is an enabling bill that allows the government to do a number of things, and we'll get back to that as well.

1700

One thing that I've heard talked about—I only got here a few minutes ago, so I did miss some of the good debate that must have been going on with the leader of the third party, which also must have gotten under the skin of the government, which would lead me to believe that it must have been some good stuff. So I'm sorry I missed that. Anyhow, they were talking about conservation and then they were talking about coal plants and nuclear plants. We're going to get into that as well, because we do have a fair bit of time today.

First, I do want to talk a little bit about conservation. This government talks a lot about conservation, but you really have to ask yourself how much support or impetus they have actually given to conservation here in the province of Ontario. There are some things out there that could be described as low-hanging fruit, and the government has done little or nothing to encourage people to take advantage of that. I'm going to talk about our own situation here a little bit.

In the last couple of years, my wife and I made the decision that we were going to try to reduce our energy consumption in our home. Having a couple of teenage children, I'm sure that anybody who is in that position knows that that's not the easiest thing to do at times. I don't say anything disparaging about our two children left at home, Emily and Lucas, because of course they're absolutely wonderful and we love them dearly, but they do tend to be a little careless at times with regard to recognizing that a switch that goes up can also go down, or "On goes off" type of thing. We have our issues with that, but we did want to take the steps that we could.

One thing we did was to lower the temperature of our hot water heater. That's a very important thing. Sometimes people have their hot water heaters running higher than is necessary and that is a significant issue with regard to their consumption, because of course in a standard 40-gallon hot water heater, if it's electric—and in our case it is electric—there are 3,500 watts of power in that heater. It's dual 3,500 watts that cycle on and off independently, so there is a lot of power used in order to heat your water. Of course, a dryer is one of the biggest users of electricity in anyone's home.

The first thing we did was to purchase energy-efficient appliances: a new washer, a new dryer and a new refrigerator. Now, the drier was not eligible, even though it's the latest technology and high-efficiency. It's still a huge consumer of power because of the very nature of what it does: It dries clothes by creating a lot of heat. But I must say, there is nobody out there who is more reluctant to use a clothes dryer than my wife, Vicky. Even in the dead of winter she's out there hanging clothes on the line because she does not believe in turning on that dryer unless it is absolutely necessary.

Socks and underwear is about all of what we dry in our dryer. Of course, the clothes that are dried on the line are so much fresher and the smell is so much sweeter. When you put those bed sheets back on the bed, and they've been dried on the line, it's like you're hopping into a cloud. The freshness of the air is invigorating. We'll leave it at that.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: Richard wants more. I'm sorry, that's as far as it goes, my friend.

The clothes dried on the line are so superior in their fragrance and everything else, and you've saved the power by doing so.

Then we thought, "We've got to do something more." So we purchased new windows for the house. We did half of them in 2004, and we've done half of them this year. My house has 24 windows in it, so we did half one year and half the next year. The house was built in 1960, so the windows were 44 and 45 years old. It was time to replace them, because they were not doing us any favours with regard to the amount of energy we were consuming in the home. So that's new windows.

We ensured that there was R20 insulation in the attic. In fact, we've got R40; there's R40 insulation in the attic.

Then, this fall, we purchased a new heating system, a brand new high-efficiency oil furnace. It is going to reduce not only our consumption of furnace oil, but also, because it's a high-efficiency blower, it's going to reduce dramatically the amount of electricity. What people don't understand sometimes is that the blower system on your forced-air furnace uses a lot of electricity. So we've done that.

We've also taken out our old heat-pump air conditioning system, and we're replacing it in the spring. There's no sense buying the air conditioning in October. You might as well wait till the spring. So we've done that.

The other thing we've done is, there's not an incandescent light in our house. There's not one, I should say, except in the hall, which is on a rheostat, a dimmer switch. I understand that I can get a fluorescent bulb now that can be dimmed, so I'm going to look after that. That will be my next job. Working here every day, I haven't had time to get out to the store to get one, but that is on my list; I can assure you of that. So if that bulb is changed, we won't have an incandescent bulb in the house. We don't even have incandescent bulbs in the garage or the sheds in behind. They're all compact fluorescents. So we've reduced the amount of electricity that we use to light our home and to light the buildings around the home. All of these kinds of things that we have done are going to add to the energy efficiency of our home.

Now, here comes a very important point: None of that was assisted in any way except the appliances, because they were bought before this government cancelled the sales tax rebate program on Energy Star appliances. They cancelled that last September, I believe, and they have brought nothing out since to replace it. Think about that:

Since September 2004, there has been no incentive to the people of the province of Ontario to purchase an energy-efficient appliance; none whatsoever. We did that, got the sales tax rebate. We purchased before this current government—the conservation government, the energy-efficient government, the one that's going to solve all our energy needs—cancelled the very program that would remove some of those wasteful, high-electricity-usage appliances from service and replace them with energy-efficient appliances. That's something we did under the program that had been brought in by the previous government, the Progressive Conservative government, and continued for a while under this government—because they didn't cancel everything right away, but anything that made sense they tried to cancel as soon as possible. All of these things that we've done to reduce the energy consumption in our home, as I said, with the exception of the appliances, has been done without any help whatsoever from this government; none whatsoever.

I am not, by any stretch of the imagination, a wealthy man. But I can tell you, I have never been in a position—I'm concerned about my hydro bill and I'm always unhappy when I see the hydro bill—where I couldn't pay the hydro bill. Obviously, we're in a position where we could make these enhancements to our home, not only for our own level of personal comfort and enjoyment, but to save electricity and to reduce our electricity costs.

1710

However, with the absence of a program, I have people in my riding who could benefit from doing these kinds of things to their home—they could reduce their energy consumption the same way that Vicky and I have reduced our energy consumption—but you know what? They can't afford it. That's the reality: There are people who can't afford it. Not only can they not afford to do these kinds of enhancements, but some of them can't afford to pay their hydro bill. I can't tell you how many times—and I can only go back to October 2003; that's when I was elected—we have had people contact our office, my constituency office in particular, worried sick because they couldn't pay their hydro bill and were at risk of having their hydro cut off. Those people aren't going to be going out and investing in new Energy Star appliances. They're not going to be changing the air conditioning or the furnace or new windows. They can't make ends meet in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, and they can't pay the hydro bill. We don't have a program in this province that looks at that because, you see, the people who can least afford to make these enhancement are the ones who are most affected by high hydro rates.

I want to take my hat off to my staff in my constituency office: Andrew Simms, Susan Fynn and Laura Lapinski, who do such a tremendous job of assisting the people in my constituency, in my riding, not only with these problems, but with every other kind of problem that comes our way. As a member of this House, you can well imagine what happens in our constituency office, which is not unlike other constituency offices in this province. I want to thank them in particular, and also my staff here at

Queen's Park: Mary-Frances Dulny, my executive assistant, and Joan Stearns, my legislative assistant.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: While you're taking a sip of water, I counted nine separate discussions going on. I think the member needs to be heard. It is his first one-hour leadoff speech, and he would appreciate, I think, being heard.

Mr. Yakabuski: Mr. Speaker, I am not deterred by that number; however, I am somewhat shocked. I would have thought that not only all of the people in the House, but those who might be in their offices or in the caucus rooms would have come down here simply on the basis that they wanted to catch this live, and that they would be captivated completely and totally by this address and would not want to miss a single word. I see the member from Huron-Bruce has reaffixed her attention on myself. I hardly expect those eyes will leave me for the rest of this hour.

Now, where was I? I said I'd be undeterred, but I didn't say that I wouldn't lose my spot.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): You were thanking your staff.

Mr. Yakabuski: Yes, thank you very much, Lorenzo. I want to thank my staff for the great work they do in assisting me, not only in my role as a member of provincial Parliament, but also as energy critic here for the Progressive Conservative Party.

Mr. Leal: Oh, you're the energy critic now?

Mr. Yakabuski: Yes.

What do we do about conservation programs in the province of Ontario that would lead to these things happening in more homes than just mine? We don't have some of the programs they have in other provinces, and this is when I really have to ask myself about the commitment. When I see members on the other side of the House answer questions, Mr. Speaker—you and I know because we don't sit far away from each other, and I know I can't involve you in this conversation—I don't know about you, but I would like to have a running count as to how many times they use the words, "We're committed. I want the people of Ontario to know that we are committed." You hear those words over and over again, but you have to ask yourself, how committed are they to energy conservation when they have nothing in place well over two years into their mandate? In fact, the only thing they have done is to remove Energy Star appliances from the conservation picture.

Other provinces: I've got to tell you, I was in a meeting with some stakeholders, and I don't have some of my papers here, but they were talking about the program in B.C. and how their energy conservation plan has resulted in \$1 billion of power saved. They have reduced the need for power by \$1 billion. They've actually been able to cancel two hydro projects because of their conservation measures, because they have been so much more proactive and so much more aggressive than this government here. That's British Columbia.

In provinces like Manitoba and Quebec, they also have energy audits where they will come in, look at your

house and tell you what you need. Then they will assist you in making those changes so that your House is more energy efficient than it would have been previously. They'll help you with that.

When this government talks about spending money, they are spending a whack of money bringing in new generation. They are working with bankrupt or soon-to-be-bankrupt companies. You wonder where that's going to take us, and that's a good question. I know the energy minister today got a telephone call from the CEO of the partner of Calpine. That should be really reassuring to the people of Ontario, that the CEO of the partnering company with the company that is about to go bankrupt, according to analysts, has phoned to reassure her. I can only imagine how many people were reassured by calls from Bernie Ebbers a couple of years ago, telling them that everything was going to be fine.

When a company is in trouble, I would expect that the CEO, anybody involved with companies surrounding that company, is going to be very quick to say things like, "Oh, not to worry, we've got it well under control. Everything is going to be fine. The energy minister is exactly right. We're going to have everything going ahead as scheduled." But we know differently. In the real world, actually, somewhere, there may have been instances where the CEO of a company has actually misled people. That may have happened.

So I'm not overly reassured, and I don't think the people of Ontario are overly reassured with the minister's response to those queries today, both by myself and by the leader of the third party, who has great concerns, as we do, about the solvency of companies this government has sort of hopped into bed with, because what has happened is that they are desperate. They have an energy policy that has forced them into a corner. And when you're nervous and you're desperate and you're scared—you know that old saying, "Haste makes waste"? That's an old one. My mother used to tell me that, and she was very right. My mother was a very wise woman. This is what has happened with this government. My mother was a very wise woman and kept us, tried to keep us—I was going to say kept us, but let's just say tried to keep us—on the straight and narrow, and that was wonderful. I was very fortunate in that regard, to have such guidance in my life.

1720

Mr. Leal: Your father was a great member too.

Mr. Yakabuski: Yes, he was. Thank you very much. The member from Peterborough alludes to my father's record in this House. I'm very proud of my father's record in this House and the fact that he made it possible for me to be here in this position today.

Mr. Leal: Tell us about Conway. He was a great member too.

Mr. Yakabuski: I don't want to get too far off track, but the member for Peterborough says, "Tell us about Conway." Of course, "Conway" refers to my cousin Sean Conway, who was the member for my riding before I was the member for my riding.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I didn't know that, John.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'll bet you did. Keep listening closely and you'll learn a few other things.

I remember talking to Sean Conway back in 2002. It was at a Remembrance Day service at the Legion in Barry's Bay. The people on the other side of the House, particularly those who were here prior to 2002, will remember that at that time, Sean Conway was the energy critic. How interesting that I'm now the energy critic for the opposition, as he was the energy critic for the opposition. I remember talking to Sean that day. It was after Sean had announced that he was not going to run again. We were talking about energy and nuclear energy and he said, "I've got to tell you one thing, John"—here's a guy who was 28 years in this House, serving his constituents in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke or Renfrew North or whatever; he had different riding names—"You just wouldn't believe how complicated that energy business is." Well, I can tell you, having been the energy critic for only a few short months now, how absolutely correct he was. I hope we continue to investigate and learn things as they go on and as the industry itself evolves, because it's going to be constantly changing even as we speak.

So there: I can't give you the history of Conway's 28 years here because it would be too long, just as I can't give you the history of my dad's 24 years, but I'm quite thankful and proud that I'm following them here in this great Legislature.

Back to conservation: There are so many things we could be doing to help people in the conservation field. I know this bill enables the government to do some things, but what the heck have they been doing for two years? For God's sake, what have they been doing to help people for the last two years? Nothing, and that's the shame of it. Because they've been so fixated on all of this other stuff they've had to bring in—legislation about gummy bears and sushi and pit bulls and all that kind of stuff—they haven't done their job on the conservation file. So these are some things that they could help with tremendously.

But as we go forward in the energy field, in the energy sector here, I hope this government does something positive with regard to conservation, but even in respect to that, we're still going to see significant and severe price increases for hydroelectricity in this province under this regime. Much of it is going to be due to their failure to recognize the reality and their failure to open their eyes to what is out there and available to them with regard to clean coal technology.

It's kind of ironic: The federal minister of energy—I think it's John McCallum—was at a breakfast last Friday. I was supposed to go to that breakfast but couldn't because I was engaged in my riding. As you know, I have a long drive to my riding on Thursday nights.

Mr. Chudleigh: How long is it?

Mr. Yakabuski: It's a long drive; it's well in excess of 300 kilometres. I was going back Thursday night

because I had engagements in my riding on Friday, and I couldn't do that breakfast.

The federal minister of energy was talking about how committed the federal government was to investing in—now listen carefully. Listen carefully.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: Did you want me to wait a minute? I don't want you to miss this.

The Minister of Energy was talking about how important it was, and how committed—that's a word that you Liberals over there use a lot—the federal government was to investing in clean coal technology.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: Yes. And how they were going to be assisting Alberta, which is investing in clean coal technology. Do you know what that means? That means lower-cost power and cleaner air for those jurisdictions: clean coal technology.

This government continues to hold on to the position that they're going to shut down coal-fired generation in this province by 2007.

Interjection: By 2009.

Mr. Yakabuski: Oh, sorry; correction. They changed their mind on that. They moved it to 2009 because they already realized they were out of line. They didn't know what they were doing. They made a commitment—again that word “commitment”—that they couldn't fulfill, and then they had to backpedal on it.

The Premier was just in China—of course, that's one of the economies that Canada is competing with—and he made the proclamation, when he got off the train or the plane—he might as well have gone on a train. How about a slow boat to China? That would have been a good place to put him.

Anyway, he got off the plane and he made the proclamation, in this sanctimonious way, “I'm absolutely certain now that we are right in our coal shutdown policy.” By getting off the plane in China, somehow he had some kind of lightning bolt or an epiphany strike him that reinforced what he wanted to do. But when he gets home, the reality is different.

They are building over 100,000 megawatts of coal power in China: within the last couple of years, under construction and to be developed within the next couple of years, over 100,000 megawatts of coal power in China. Do you know where they're building coal power? They're building it in Germany and Denmark—whoosh, whoosh, whoosh. Those are the places that are the world leaders in capturing and harnessing the wind. But why are they investing in coal? Because they've invested in clean coal technology.

What has this government done? It has sat there and wiggled and jiggled like a wiggle worm and done nothing to clean up our existing coal plants.

What's going to happen in 2007 and 2009 when they're not able to complete their “project,” when they're not able to shut down those generators like they said they would? But remember, that's just a Liberal promise. You pages over there, don't take any Liberal

promises too seriously. They're not going to be able to shut down those plants. Where will we be? We will be in a position where we've actually burned the coal plants for four years without investing a nickel in making them clean.

What have we done to enhance and improve the quality of air in the province of Ontario in four years under this government? We will have done nothing. So they're really worried. Then, when you see things like Calpine probably going bankrupt, it throws a real wrench into their plans to proceed and fulfill their commitment.

1730

What are they doing in Germany and Denmark? Germany, by the way, gets about 15% of its power from wind. It's one of the leading nations in the world; Denmark is the leading nation. But you see, for every megawatt of wind they've got, they also have—probably not on a one-to-one basis but pretty close, because we can only depend on wind to operate at about 25% to 30% efficiency. The windmill here, down at the waterfront in Toronto, operates at about 25%; at the max, you're going to get about 30%. So for every megawatt of wind that they've got on the ground, they've got to have pretty much an equal amount of spinning reserve that they can dispatch at the call of the operator, because you can't depend on the wind. You can't say, “In three hours, we'd like 150 megawatts from your wind farm.” There is a little problem if the wind doesn't co-operate. The good Lord controls the wind, but OPG can control the coal plant. So if they want to dispatch 150 megawatts and the wind doesn't blow, they're going to get squat. If you're depending on that wind to blow at one particular time or another, you could be in trouble. You will be in trouble unless you've got something that you can dispatch to make up for that shortfall.

Germany and Denmark have invested in clean coal technology. We always talk about them as being the ones most committed to wind. Well, they recognize the limitations of wind. We recognize the importance of wind. I want to make one thing abundantly clear: We should be making every investment we can in renewables in this province. Our party believes in investment in renewables, but we can't spread the silly notion that this government wants to spread: that somehow they're going to be able to solve the energy needs of this province on renewables alone. We support renewables: Any kind of energy that you can get without burning anything is good energy—damned good energy, in my mind. It's good for the province and it's great for the environment. We support that 100%. But we have to be abundantly clear as to the limitations of that kind of technology.

As I've said, we support investment in renewables, but we don't want to confuse people with what the actual numbers are. You see, the minister talks about 9,000 megawatts. She always says, “We've brought on 9,000 megawatts.” What kind of bunk is that? You haven't brought something on until it's actually spewing out power and I can turn on my lamp based on that commitment of power in the lines. They're talking about

it, they're thinking about it, they even may have made some kind of an agreement with somebody—maybe with a bankrupt company, who knows—but it isn't ready yet.

When she speaks about that—and I want to caution the member from Peterborough. I believe that he's a former teacher, right?

Mr. Leal: No.

Mr. Yakabuski: No? I'm sorry; I apologize. But I know you're smart and you're good at math. I know you're good at math.

You see, when the minister talks about 975 megawatts, like she did when she made the announcement last week, we've got to do the math. When you're investing 975 megawatts in wind renewables, you've got to do a little something that we took in about grade 3 or 4, and that's called division. You've got to divide it by three, at the best, and you've got to bring that down to about 325 megawatts, and that is the absolute best. It's more likely about 280 megawatts that you could actually consider to be working out of that amount of power. So, 975 megawatts, guys. Don't try and fool the people, and stop trying to kid yourselves. I think it's very important that you recognize that those things are not exactly right.

I want to read some things in letters from other people. Maybe we'll get to them. We will, I'm sure, have plenty of time for that. Sometimes you kind of lose where you are, because these people who are listening so intently they throw you off your train of thought sometimes.

We're still on that coal. I don't want to spend all of my time—

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): It's those members who are interrupting.

Mr. Yakabuski: Oh.

I certainly want to make it clear that we have taken every opportunity to try to get this government to reconsider some of the mistakes they've got in their coal policy and, if not invest, at least investigate what is out there.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: We have to be aware. The member for Peterborough says something about the United States. Well, let's not kid ourselves, folks. The United States built five new coal plants in our airshed last year. There are at least 15 currently under construction.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: Well, they're going to invest in clean coal technology. They're investing in clean coal technology, but the existing plants, you're right, are dirty. Even if we shut down our five coal plants, where do you think the air is coming from, folks? Less than 10% of the coal, the effects of coal in our airshed, comes out of Ontario. That's the Ministry of the Environment's own numbers: 10% of the SO_x in our atmosphere from coal comes out of Canadian coal plants; the rest of it comes from the Americans. We have to ask ourselves what we're going to accomplish here. What we are losing the opportunity on is four years of cleaning up coal. We could clean up every coal plant in this province, every

unit of every coal plant, for about \$1.3 billion. Take those numbers and think about what we've invested or what we're investing already in other forms of energy generation in exchange for that.

Let's talk for a minute about smart meters. Again, this bill is enabling legislation with regard to smart meters, which doesn't tell us a whole heck of a lot about smart meters. But there's a lot of concern out there with regard to smart meters and what they will and will not accomplish, and what the cost may or may not be. The ministry says they think it's going to cost about a billion dollars. Some people say it could cost as high as \$4 billion. Tom Adams of Energy Probe says it could add as much as \$8 a month to the average person's electricity bill. What are we actually going to get out of it? We're going to get a variable rate structure starting next year, May 1. We're going to be in a situation where, if you're using power, if you've got one of these so-called smart meters—but they're not two-way meters or anything else—they're just going to tell you that this is what you're burning and it's within this time frame. If you're burning power between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m., you're going to pay 6.4 cents a kilowatt hour. If you're between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., you're going to pay 9.3 cents a kilowatt hour. If you're between 5 p.m. and 10 p.m., you're going to be back to 6.4, and between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., you're going to pay 2.9 cents a kilowatt hour, if you've got a smart meter installed in your home.

What are we going to actually accomplish? Are we just going to move, shift the load from one point of the day to the other so that some people can maybe affect their own energy usage at one time of day or another? If we're talking about conservation, are we actually going to reduce the amount of energy we use? In fairness, we will reduce the amount of energy we need at peak times, if that works. Do we really want to create a situation where people are running down to the basement or up to the laundry room, wherever it may be, at 4 or 3 or 2 in the morning to put clothes in the dryer, and then have to sit there with the clothes, because it is very inadvisable to put clothes in the dryer, turn it on and then go back to bed? It's not very good. Clothes dryers are one of the prime causes of fires. They create a lot of heat and can actually be one of the reasons why fires happen in a home. So you don't put your clothes in a dryer and then go back to bed. What kind of quality of life is that if we have people who feel they've got to rush down there, throw the clothes in the dryer and then sit up and watch them?

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If they are talking about two-way meters, they might accomplish a little more in the way that they can feed information back and forth and we're actually on timed intervals. The other thing is that if we had everybody on—you see, we had a program, the previous government had a plan, that they were going to put smart meters in every new home that was built—

Mr. Leal: Oh, so you had a plan for smart meters too?

Mr. Yakabuski: That's right, and actually the fact that people would then be able to voluntarily buy into

that—this is not going to be voluntary. It's going to be forced on everybody. So could you envision—I'm just thinking of a retail business now, or the mall—a hot, hot July like July 13 of this year, where we hit an all-time high of 26,160 megawatts of power used in the province of Ontario: What have we got? We've got people flocking from their homes, flocking from their apartments, and they're all going to the mall. Do you know why? Because it's air-conditioned. They can't afford to run the air conditioning at home because they can't pay the high cost of power as a result of the policies of this government. So they're flocking to the mall, and then of course the retailers are going to have to have their air conditioning pumped up to keep the temperature down. The cost is going to be doubly hard to bear for those establishments, but they're not going to have any choice but to keep those temperatures down for the comfort of the customers.

The experiments and the history of smart meters in other jurisdictions should cause people to ask themselves whether or not we should be making this kind of massive commitment—again, that's the word: commitment—to this kind of across-the-board, absolute—and right now, we don't know that they're going to be smart meters. The things being bandied about, or the proposals being bandied about on them, could mean that they're going to be dumb meters that don't do the job a real metering system does. If they are going to be that, we have to question how much energy, and whether the savings will even approach what the additional cost of the meter is.

As I said, Tom Adams has speculated that it could go as high as \$8 a month. For those people I was talking about before who cannot afford the hydro bills today, at five cents a kilowatt hour, up to 5.8 if it goes over the 750 kilowatt hours or the 1,000, now the ceiling—if they can't afford those bills now, can they afford another \$8 and can they afford the rates they're going to be paying under this government because of their energy policies?

I want to go back a little bit to what they're doing in Germany and Denmark with regard to biomass, cogen and even tri-gen, and that is what they're doing to reduce the CO₂ emissions in coal, because the technology is there to eliminate 98% of the NO_x and 96% of the SO_x in coal. This is what the government talked about. But do you know what? They're not talking so much about NO_x and SO_x now, because they know that NO_x and SO_x are beatable, and can be beat. So now they're talking about CO₂. But if you bring in biomass, cogen and even tri-gen, where you're burning wood pellets and other agricultural biomass with the coal, you can reduce that CO₂ level to as good as natural gas. Natural gas has CO₂; let's not kid ourselves. Natural gas will emit about 40% of the CO₂ that coal emits, simply because there is less carbon in natural gas than there is in coal.

So we have ways of mitigating the effect of burning coal by burning it together with carbon-neutral biomass and reducing the emissions in that way. But this government is not interested. They would rather simply proceed the way they've been proceeding: blinders on.

Just like a horse going down the side of the road, the blinders are on because the operator of the carriage doesn't want it to see the traffic and panic. But that's exactly what this government is doing with regard to their energy policy: They're panicking.

Let's talk a little bit about nuclear.

Mrs. Mitchell: OK.

Mr. Yakabuski: I hear the member from Huron-Bruce has awakened. Hello, again.

I know she's very pleased with the announcement recently. I believe that plant is in your riding. Is that correct?

Mrs. Mitchell: Yes.

Mr. Yakabuski: We're very supportive of that. We're very supportive of nuclear. We believe that the government should be moving in the direction of new-build nuclear as well, because we have to ensure that we have the baseload capacity in Ontario. If we don't have baseload capacity, we're going to be in big trouble. What this government is doing with regard to investing and calling investments in other technologies true megawatts is not correct. We want to ensure that, as older plants are decommissioned, we are in a position to ensure that the lights will stay on in Ontario and that the manufacturers who need that power so badly will have that power available to them.

But we also have to remember that nuclear has its limitations. It has its issues with regard to the management of waste, which we have to ensure we're dealing with, but it is also a baseload power, plain and simple. We can't use it as a peaking power because of the nature of nuclear, as you know. Compare peaking power, like a coal plant, to the accelerator on your car: When you need a little more, you accelerate, and if you need a little less, you pull back on that accelerator. With a nuclear plant, as we know, it's the pedal to the metal. Put a block on it and forget about it. You're running it full out. So it is a baseload power, not a peaking power, and we have to ensure that we have baseload capacity in Ontario.

We have to ensure that we have that peaking capacity too, and it appears to me that under this government's regime we're not going to have that peaking capacity under their present timetable if they go ahead with their ill-conceived decision to refuse to invest in the right technologies.

I want to read a couple of things about smart meters. Many people have opinions on smart meters and, in fairness, I say that a number of people are very much in favour of smart meters. But I want to read a couple of things here.

This is from the Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal. I was up in Thunder Bay last week, and also in Atikokan. I must say that the decisions of this government to convert the Thunder Bay plant to natural gas and to close the Atikokan plant are absolutely dumb. Those decisions are dumb.

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First of all, converting an existing coal plant to natural gas is in no way going to make that plant efficient. It's

not designed to be converted to natural gas and then have the same kind of efficiency you would have from a new combined-cycle natural gas plant. It's not designed that way. By simply converting it to a different type of fuel, you're not going to get the efficiencies.

One of the reasons that they claim natural gas is better than coal is because of the efficiency at which you can burn it. You can get about 58% efficiency out of a natural gas power plant, and you can't get as high an efficiency out of a coal plant. Do you know where you get the most efficiency out of natural gas? Right in that furnace in your own home; you can burn it at 95% efficiency. That's where you should be primarily burning natural gas. If you want to be the best in the environment, burn it where it burns most efficiently.

Up in Thunder Bay, that's what they are planning on doing. Converting that plant to natural gas is going to be inefficient and is going to mean expensive power.

But even more so, in Atikokan there's a community that this government has simply washed its hands of. I know that the finance minister made a trip up there this week for pre-budget consultations—we know what a sham that is—in Atikokan. Two years ago when he was energy minister he took his parliamentary assistant up there, who is now the energy minister, Ms. Cansfield, and they toured the Atikokan plant. They talked about how they were not going to let this community suffer. What have they done? They appointed some people to study it, but what have they actually done? What can they do to replace the kinds of economic activity and economic input that are going to be taken out of that community if they close down the plant in Atikokan? This community is going to be devastated. Their tax base is going to be down by up to 20%. Some of the best jobs in the community will be gone.

It's questionable whether the CN will keep the train running there, because 6,500 cars a year to that community are going to be gone, and another 6,500 to Thunder Bay, plus the cars that transfer the fly ash out of there. Why would CN keep it open if they've got no reason to, even though they've said—kind of iffy—"We don't plan to close it down"? They're a business too.

When the Minister of Natural Resources was up in Atikokan, he commented that he'd like to see that plant converted to biomass. I would like to hear the Minister of Natural Resources stand up in this House, and stand up at his cabinet table, and demand from his colleagues, "If you don't convert that plant to biomass or something, I'm going to resign my seat." Then he'd really be standing up for the people in the north. However, it appears that they have one thing to say here and another thing to say there.

Interjections.

Mr. Yakabuski: Hard to believe.

In two years they've done nothing to assist this community. I talked to people on the street in Atikokan. I stopped in at some stores. They are so worried and feel that hope is lost. What else are they going to do? What else is coming to Atikokan?

It was our government that built the plant in Atikokan to save a community that had been decimated because of

the fact that the mines had shut down. This government is doing nothing to replace that, and that is regrettable, but it's not unusual for them to turn their backs on people. They've turned their backs on people everywhere in rural Ontario, including my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: I was just getting to that editorial from the Thunder Bay Chronicle. I am going to do that right now.

"Are Smart Meters Really a Smart Idea?"

"Hydro One customers will soon have to start setting the alarm clock to do the dishes at 1 a.m., and get up again at 4 a.m. to turn on the clothes dryer.

"Energy Minister Donna Cansfield has introduced legislation to replace Ontario's 4.5 million electricity meters by so-called 'smart' meters by 2010 at a cost of \$1 billion...." They're using her figure, which is probably way low. Is one company going to get this contract to replace these smart meters? Are they going to be in a position to fulfill these kinds of commitments: 4.5 million electricity meters? Unbelievable.

"The new meters, which will allow utilities to charge consumers based on the time of day they use their power, is a key part of the power-starved province...." There's the key. Listen carefully over there: "power-starved province."

Their reaction to being power-starved: "Let's cut our capacity by another 20%."

"While advocates of electricity conservation applaud the plan, will it work and is it realistic?"

"It's definitely going to add costs to your already inflated hydro bill and require some major changes in lifestyle if any savings are to be realized."

We have to talk about lifestyle. We have built, particularly under other governments, a thriving economy that has given people wonderful lifestyles in Ontario, and this government wants you to trade them in for a smart meter. You have to really ask yourself, when you've worked so hard to enjoy the fruits of your labour, if now you're going to be spending your time checking the meter at 2 in the morning. But that's this government for you.

I do want to wrap up because, as I look at the clock, heavens to Betsy, I'm running out of time. It is certainly a pleasure for me to do this first lead, and I'm hoping, with some of the ideas that a number of my colleagues have imparted already, that this government will take a long, hard look at what it's doing.

As I said from the start, you're not going to get a bigger supporter of conservation than yours truly, John Yakabuski, right here. I've articulated what we have done in our own home to reduce our energy consumption. We've done this without any help from this government. If this government is truly serious about conservation, they'll enact regulations through this legislation as quickly as possible to ensure—you know, we even have these energy-efficient light bulbs I'm telling you about.

Mr. Leal: Did you sell them in your hardware store?

Mr. Yakabuski: You're darn right I did.

What do we do to help people get them? We charge sales tax. If you want to get an energy-efficient light bulb in every socket in this province, at least remove the tax on energy-efficient light bulbs. They can't seem to see through it. You see, this government is so addicted to

taxes that they can't even remove them from light bulbs. I wish the lights would soon go on.

The Acting Speaker: The time being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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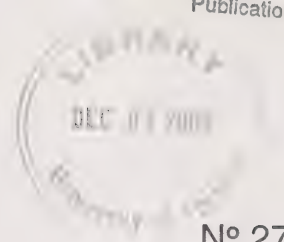
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Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

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Thursday 1 December 2005

Jeudi 1^{er} décembre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 1 December 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 1^{er} décembre 2005

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (INSULIN PUMPS FOR DIABETICS), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ (POMPES À INSULINE POUR DIABÉTIQUES)

Mr. Gravelle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act /
Projet de loi 15, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-
santé.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant
to standing order 96, Mr. Gravelle, you have up to 10
minutes.

**Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior
North):** Bill 15 is a very straightforward, simple and
quite short, one-page piece of legislation. However, if
this bill is supported by my colleagues today, and sub-
sequently receives the support of the government, the
impact its passage will have on the lives of thousands of
people with diabetes will be nothing short of dramatic.

By making the provision of an insulin pump and its
supplies a covered service under the Ontario health
insurance plan, we will be improving the day-to-day life
of people with diabetes by helping them better manage
their glucose levels, which is the key to preventing the
serious complications that are the frightening reality that
people with diabetes live with as they struggle to manage
this debilitating and insidious disease.

While the insulin pump may not be suitable or helpful
to every person with diabetes, there are thousands of On-
tarians who would greatly benefit from it today, who are
not able to access this service because they simply cannot
afford it. In fact, the Canadian Diabetes Association
receives calls every day from people who have been told
by their physician that they should be using an insulin
pump, but unless they have employer or private health
insurance, they are simply not able to purchase it.

I will acknowledge that the costs seem substantial.
The pump itself costs \$6,000 and monthly supplies can
run anywhere between \$300 to \$400 a month. However, I
believe the price of not covering the pump under the
OHIP plan is far more substantial. Let's just look at some
of the facts. Diabetes is expected to cost \$2.13 billion in
direct costs to the health care system in 2005. Diagnosed
diabetics comprise 6% of Ontario's population but they
account for 51% of new kidney dialysis. Dialysis costs
about \$50,000 per person per year and of course is
covered by OHIP. They account for 70% of amputations
in the province. A leg amputation costs \$70,000, and,
again, it's covered by OHIP. They also account for 43%
of heart failures. In fact, 80% of diabetics die from
cardiovascular disease and its complications.

Type 1 diabetics, who are most likely to benefit from
the insulin pump, are approximately 10% of Ontario's
diabetic population but account for 40% of the direct
costs of diabetes in Ontario—over \$800 million. This is
not even taking into account the indirect costs to the
health care system and our economy, such as rehabili-
tation after hospitalization, depression, lost productivity,
lost wages, sick days and unemployment.

The facts, as unpleasant as they are, go on and on, but
the fact that I want to focus on today is that the provision
of an insulin pump can change all those cold and rather
grim statistics. Today there are approximately 3,000 On-
tarians living with an insulin pump to help manage their
disease, and their lives have changed immeasurably for
the good. Many of them are with us today in the gallery,
and each and every one will tell you how much better
their lives have been since they became pumpers. And
while that improved quality of life is clearly the greatest
benefit of the insulin pump, there is no denying that the
health care system is also very much the beneficiary of
their being able to access that service. Just imagine the
benefits if all those who needed the pump could have
ready access to it.

So far, I've spoken about statistics. For a moment,
let's talk about people. Since I began this quest to see our
government provide the insulin pump under OHIP, I've
spoken with hundreds of people—some with a pump,
many without it. I've heard from literally thousands of
people by e-mail. They all have their own story to tell—
sometimes uplifting, sometimes heartbreaking—but in
each and every case there is a common thread: Their
lives have been altered by their struggle with diabetes.

Those who have been able to access an insulin pump
invariably have a life-changing story to tell. One of the
most remarkable stories—and I return to it—may be that

of Paul Beckwith, who is in the Legislature with us today. I met him when I first introduced this legislation last year. Diagnosed with diabetes in 1966 at the age of 13—I know my colleague from Simcoe North will want to talk about him as well—Mr. Beckwith spent 30 years struggling to manage his condition, with mixed results. At the time he was finally able to access the insulin pump, I guess about seven years ago, he was in grave danger of having his foot amputated and was not able to work regularly. However, once he began insulin pump therapy, his quality of life improved dramatically. The amputation was averted and he was able to return to work—certainly a wonderful story, but also an instructive one. The long and short of it is that the insulin pump can make an extraordinary difference in a person's life.

Perhaps less dramatic, but no less inspiring, is the story of my constituent Derek Lawrence, a teenager who went on the pump over three years ago. When I met with him, I was struck by how unobtrusive the pump actually was, but more significantly, I was moved and impressed by how the pump allowed Derek to lead a normal teenage life, something he could not do before, something he had been totally denied before and now he could do.

But sadly, for every uplifting story, there are many more stories of lives compromised by diabetes, of people who struggle daily with managing this disease, people such as my constituent, who contacted me recently from his hospital bed, a gentleman who could not afford the insulin pump but who certainly would benefit from it, yet for now is a brittle diabetic who is frequently in the hospital, often for several days at a time.

1010

It's not my intention today to harangue or to guilt our government into supporting this legislation. Indeed, I am incredibly conscious of the financial pressures that face both the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance as we struggle to manage the ever-growing demands on our health care system in Ontario. We and all those concerned with the management of diabetes in the province are grateful for the financial support the province provides to fight this disease. Included in that support was the announcement earlier this week of a new investment of \$15 million for the development of 69 new diabetes education and care teams across the province. Personally, I was pleased to announce that almost \$2 million of those new funds will be provided to the Thunder Bay region.

These funds are a good investment and much appreciated. But today I ask the minister to once again look positively on the overwhelming benefits that insulin pump therapy does and will provide to people with diabetes and to the enormous cost savings that would result if all people who could benefit from the pump were able to access it. As for the Minister of Finance, I acknowledge the challenges he faces as he prepares next spring's budget. Having said that, I note with some interest that he personally has advocated for this specific legislation himself. In June 2003, while still in opposition, Minister Duncan introduced this exact same legislation into the House. Although it never got beyond first

reading, it certainly indicated that he recognized the enormous benefit of insulin pump therapy. In fact, it was he who first encouraged me to bring this legislation forward for the first time last year. As we move this legislation forward today, I hope the minister will give serious consideration to including the necessary funding for coverage of the insulin pump and the supplies associated with it in next year's budget.

Clearly, there is great support for this legislation amongst my colleagues on all sides of the House. I am grateful for that, as are all the advocates with us in the public galleries and those watching the proceedings today across the province. Yes, the upfront costs may be substantial. I was speaking with the Ontario Diabetes Action Partnership in terms of their advocacy for children with diabetes and type 1 diabetics, and they're looking at potentially somewhere between \$6 million and \$15 million. But it would make such an enormous difference. The reality is that the benefits both to the quality of life and to the health care system clearly outweigh those initial costs. I only hope that today's debate and the support that we expect we will receive at 12 noon when we vote on this will be a crucial step in seeing the insulin pump become a health care reality under the Ontario health insurance plan.

To many of us, this has taken on the quality of a crusade. Indeed, that may be an accurate description of this campaign, and that is because all of us who are waging this campaign have seen the enormous difference an insulin pump can make in the lives of people with diabetes. We want to see those benefits extended to everyone in this province for whom a pump is recommended therapy by their physician.

In the little bit of time I have left, I want to close with a quote from a friend of mine in Thunder Bay. But I want to recognize the great support we've had across the province. We've got some wonderful people in the galleries today, and I do want to acknowledge some of them. Suzanne Sterling, the regional director of the Canadian Diabetes Association, northwest division, Thunder Bay, is here, as are her colleagues Gary O'Connor, area executive director for the GTA-central south, and Alan Marks, the GTA regional chair. Whitney Binns, the marketing and communications officer, is here as well. I mentioned Paul Beckwith, from the Ontario Diabetes Action Partnership, and Terry Anne Thomson, the coordinator for ODAP. Zachary Smith, a great young lad, and Lyla-Kay Collins are here as well, who are both on the pump, and their lives have been changed in a remarkable way.

Let me close by quoting Maggie Bellefontaine, a manager of Diabetes Health Thunder Bay: "It is time to provide people with diabetes equitable access to improved treatments to manage their diabetes. Insulin is not a cure. Managing diabetes is like juggling balls while walking a tightrope between two cliffs, not an easy task at the best of times." Let's make that challenge less perilous today by passing the legislation so that people with diabetes can have a fighting chance.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I am very pleased to rise today to support the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North, Mr. Gravelle, in private members' time, on the reading and debate on Bill 15, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act. I think it's important to note that the main section of the bill is section 11.2 of the Health Insurance Act, and it is amended by adding a following subsection: "(1.1) The provision of insulin pumps and supplies for the pumps are insured services." That's what Mr. Gravelle asked for in Bill 55 and that's what he's asking for today in this piece of legislation. I can tell you that from my own perspective, I support it wholeheartedly.

Just to let you know, I have with me today four folks who came up to my office. I welcome everyone who is in the Legislature today to lend us support to the bill, but I wanted to put some faces to the names and tell you a bit of the history of these folks.

Mr. Gravelle mentioned that Paul Beckwith is here. Paul is a person from my township, a resident of my riding. He has been on an insulin pump for eight and a half years. He has had type 1 diabetes for 38 years of his life.

Also with me today from the town of Penetanguishene is Glen Heatherington, who also has a pump. He has had type 1 diabetes for 40 years of his life.

As well, we have Melanie Hellstern. Melanie doesn't have an insulin pump, but she has a 14-year-old son who has had an insulin pump for the last four years. Having the pump has allowed Melanie to go back to work. She wasn't able to do that previously because she had to care for her son. It has allowed her to go back and work at full employment and pay taxes.

Finally, we have a registered nurse with us today, Karen Lyn. Karen has type 1 diabetes. She has been on an insulin pump for six years. I want to show you, with the consent of the House, Mr. Speaker—I'll get this right back to Karen; I won't take it anywhere—one of the insulin pumps we're talking about, with a \$6,500 value. I thought it would be nice to show people just how small it is. It's a very expensive device, but this is making people's lives much more healthy and convenient.

The member already mentioned some of the savings. My understanding is that the cost of dialysis now—you said \$50,000; I understand it's closer to \$65,000. Just to remove a limb costs \$74,000 in upfront costs, but there are all the ongoing costs of the health care associated with that.

Paul Beckwith is a strong advocate for this. I have to give Paul so much credit, because at times his health hasn't been 100%. Let me give you examples of how an insulin pump over the last eight and a half years has changed Paul's life.

Before I get on to that, I want to just very briefly say that Paul presented petitions to me. Paul and his group of people presented over 9,000 petitions to me in my office. I presented about half of them yesterday in the House—the balance will be presented today—in support of Bill

15, previously Bill 55. The intent here is that this is a very important issue to a lot of people in Ontario—not just the people who have diabetes but their families, who are affected by this as well. We're asking for that strong support here.

Here is the story of Paul. He presented this to me. At a period of time when he had four to six injections per day of two different insulins, Paul had over 4,000 shots of laser to each of his eyes. Since he has been on an insulin pump, there has been no laser treatment done on his eyes in the last eight and a half years. Think of that: 4,000 shots. He mentioned that before the insulin pump, his sick days from work were too numerous to count. He was off all the time. In eight and a half years since he has been on the insulin pump, Paul Beckwith has had one sick day. It's an incredible story.

He had two motor vehicle accidents because of low blood sugar, previous to the insulin pump, and since then, thank God, he has had no motor vehicle accidents. Under the injection system, Paul had his licence suspended three times. Since he's been on the insulin pump, he's had a perfect record. In the eight and a half years, he's had no suspensions.

1020

Glucose control 1.2 mmol—I'm not medical. I don't even know what that means, so I'd better not get into that. I'll pass that over to the physician on the other side; maybe he will understand that better.

He suffered from hypoglycemia unawareness and now he does not have that. Finally, 911 was being called two to three times a week previous to the insulin pump; no 911 calls in eight and a half years.

There's one example. There's a lot more detail on this page than just what I have mentioned here today. But I can tell you that it has changed the lives of people like Paul, and it has changed the lives of the other three folks who are here today as well. They're here strongly advocating that we proceed with this legislation.

We've been here before. I hope that in this House today everybody will support this bill. I hope we will send it off to a committee and that at the committee it will get debate. But what is more important is, after the debate and after the committee hearings, that we bring it back for the final reading so that we can actually vote on this bill in this House. It might even be able to be done as early as the end of this session, and if not then, hopefully at the end of the next session.

What is important is that we have an opportunity to provide this assistance to these residents of our province. And what's really important is that we don't not call it. If we have this thing go through committee, to have it sit there on the order paper and to die I think is a mistake. So let's make sure that all members of this House—we can send letters to the Minister of Finance. As you mentioned earlier, the Minister of Finance introduced this bill originally. Possibly it's an opportunity for him to show strong advocacy as well if he pushes this ahead in the spring budget, saying we'll cover it.

I think it will be a cost saving to the province of Ontario. I can't see how it cannot be. However, maybe

there is some data out there that I don't understand, and maybe the Ministry of Finance could send it to all members of this House and tell us why it shouldn't pass. But from my perspective, after listening to this debate a number of times in this House and after talking to my friend Paul Beckwith, who is in my office about once a week advocating on behalf of this piece of legislation, I want to tell you that I think it's important for the citizens of this province that we proceed with it and support Mr. Gravelle's bill.

We know the Ministry of Health has a huge budget. We know there are all types of demands on the ministry, but this appears to be one that's affecting a large number of people in the province. I understand that Quebec has just moved forward with covering the supplies around the insulin pumps. I'm not sure of the full details on that yet. But I think we have to take this very, very seriously in our country.

We have a lot of strong advocates here today—and we have a lot of strong advocates for whom it wouldn't even be possible to attend today—who belong to all the diabetes associations across our province. These people are out hosting golf tournaments, hosting luncheons, and every time you go to one of their events, Bill 15 or Bill 55 comes up: "When is the government going to pass this piece of legislation? When are we going to see action on this?"

I would urge the government members here today—I'm sure you'll be supporting the bill—in your caucus meetings to ask the Minister of Finance, to ask the government to bring it forward. I'm sure you'll get 100% support in this House. I'm sure that it will be a positive story for the government and, God knows, you need a positive story once in a while.

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: The fact of the matter is that you do need a positive story, but let's make this bill actually work. Let's get it passed today. Let's get it into committee. Let's get it into third reading, and let's pass this bill in this House so that the people who are here today advocating on behalf of the thousands of people in Ontario who have diabetes can have some satisfaction and some comfort in knowing that the government of Ontario and this Legislative Assembly supports their needs.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): To my colleague the member from—I don't remember Mr. Gravelle's riding.

The Deputy Speaker: Thunder Bay–Superior North.

Mr. Bisson: Thank you very much. I was going to go by the old riding name. That's my problem. I've been around here too long, and I get the ridings mixed up with what they used to be.

I just want to say to the honourable member, first of all, that we will be supporting his bill. We think this is a good idea, something that's very necessary, as has been spoken to already by both Mr. Gravelle and the previous speaker. Certainly those people watching the debate today and those people who are with us today can speak

volumes on the need to do this, because we do know it's a huge expense to families to be able to provide an insulin pump, and the benefit that is gained from those insulin pumps is immeasurable. I know, in my own constituency, a number of people whom I've dealt with over the years who have had to go on insulin pumps talk about what it has done for their lives after being on the pumps. I want to say up front that we support this.

I want to turn the debate to something that's tied to what we're talking about but speaks more of the process that we're in here in the Legislature. That is, I believe that private members' hour is becoming more and more the model of how we should run this place. I want to say, with all sincerity, that far too often the work that is done in this Legislature by way of government bills tends to be pretty one-sided. I don't care if it's Liberal, Conservative or NDP; all governments have their bills, and the majority, which is the government, decides what they want as far as business of the House. Far too often, even backbench members of the government are stuck in debate on bills that they may not feel very strongly about. I find that private members' hour is one of those times in this Legislature where we can really do meaningful work. An example of this morning: Mr. Gravelle brings to the floor of this Legislature an issue that's important to a number of people in this province. What better way for us as legislators to spend our time than trying to do something to improve the lives of our constituents and make the greater constituency of Ontario a better place for people to live in?

That's the point I want to make. One of the things we need to do at one point in a future Parliament is take a look at how we're able to increase the participation of members by way of introducing bills into the Legislature, and being able not only to debate them and pass them at second reading but actually get the bills passed into law. It seems to me that's what this Legislature was supposed to be all about. It was supposed to be about members being elected individually in their own constituencies, coming to this place, raising the issues that are important for their constituents and having actual legislation, or motions or initiatives passed in order to affect what happens to the people back home.

Instead, what has happened over the years is that the Office of the Premier—and I don't care which government it is; it's always the same—decides what the direction is, and 99% of the time of this assembly is then taken up by the business of the inner cabinet and the Premier and, quite frankly, we as legislators are here doing the business of unelected advisers who work for the Premier. Basically, that's what it comes down to. We're here to do their political work, and the people in the backrooms make all the decisions. It seems to me that's an inverted situation.

This Legislature should be about 103 members coming to this House, introducing at their occasion bills that are important for their constituents and having a debate among the elected officials about what the agenda of this Legislature should be. I just think that it's high time that we try to figure out a way to make that happen.

However, with this particular bill, I'm afraid the possibility exists—and it's a great possibility—that, yes, we will pass this bill at second reading, we will probably get it into committee, I would think we might even get some hearings on it; but the likelihood of a private member's bill becoming law is a really small one. Just look at the history of the last two years: Of all the private members' bills that were introduced in this Legislature—I'm the whip of our party; I don't even think there's one that's actually passed.

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): Anaphylactic.

Mr. Bisson: Anaphylactic. That was a bill that Mr. Levac originally brought forward in previous Parliaments. It was a huge amount of work, and there was one for yourself, Mr. Speaker. The point is, it took those members four, five, six, seven years to get those bills passed, and it didn't happen on the first attempt. Normally, they get it passed at second reading and it dies on the order paper. They bring it back the next time they get a ballot item. They put it in a second time and the same thing happens: The bill gets passed but dies on the order paper, but eventually, members persist, and this is what Mr. Gravelle is doing. He wants to have his bill passed, and I just think it's a shame that members are put in the position where they're really not able to get the legislative time they need in this House to deal with these important matters. This is an opportunity for us to raise it, because I think his bill is a primary example of how we can do some good work in this Legislature.

1030

I just say to members across the way that we, as individual members, at some point need to take control of this Legislature. We need to take the control away from those unelected people who work for Premiers and ministers. We end up doing their bidding, but it should be the other way around. I think there are a couple of ways we can do that. I believe the best way is to change the way that we elect people in this place. The first-past-the-post system that we have in Canada, as we do in Great Britain, is a tried-and-true system, but it's getting kind of old. If you look at most modern democracies, they've moved to a system of proportional representation, the idea simply being that if a party is elected with, let's say, 42% of the vote in a general election, they will get 42% of the seats, and each of the other parties are apportioned seats according to the percentage vote they got. That means that for any government that gets elected—the Liberal Party in the last election would obviously be the government because they were at 42% and they had more votes than anybody else, but they would have to work with the opposition parties. But it would also mean that they would work with their own backbench, and that's the point I really want to make.

Far too often in government, backbenchers are not taken seriously. They need the backbenchers to sustain the government but do not do enough, I believe, to support the needs of the backbenchers. I know that because I've sat in government, as has Mr. Gravelle, and I'm saying that from the experience on sitting on both sides

of the House. In a funny way, you have much more freedom and latitude to get more done in opposition than you do as a backbencher. That's always amazed me. I always used to think, "Man, it's a lot better to be on the government side." It is, from a satisfying point of view, but when it comes to being able to raise the issues of your constituents, it's a lot easier to do it from the opposition benches. Far too often, a government backbencher has to be mindful of what his party and his Premier have to say. If they want to get into cabinet, they really have to toe the party line.

That's why I think we need to change the way we elect people around here, so that every member is taken as an individual member. You may be a Liberal or a New Democrat or a Conservative or a Green or whatever you might be, but at the end of the day, your vote counts. That means that the vote of the people in your constituency counts in the end. Second, when you come into the Legislature as a representative, the government can't take you for granted. That's one of the ways that we can fix this.

Another way is possibly to try to find a way of increasing the time we get for private members' business. I think that would be a thing well done.

The third part is that we need to take control of the assembly in some way so that members are able to get their bills actually passed into law. It should be a decision of the majority of the assembly, not necessarily those people in the back rooms of the corridors of power, as we say.

Back to the issue of diabetes. I needed to put that on the record, Speaker, and I know you were being somewhat patient with me. It is related. I think you agreed with me and that's why you didn't rule me out of order.

Back to the issue of diabetes itself. I represent a constituency in northern Ontario called Timmins-James Bay. In my constituency, diabetes is a huge problem, especially in the northern communities of the Mushkegowuk Cree and also the Ojibways in Martin Falls and Constance Lake and other places across northeastern and northwestern Ontario. Part of it is lifestyle, genetics, but the other part of it is diet. Trying to eat a full, healthy diet in a place like, let's say, Attawapiskat is pretty difficult to do, when a head of lettuce will probably cost you \$5 or \$6 and doesn't look very appetizing. So people tend to eat foods that are maybe not necessarily as good as they need to be for their health.

We have a huge problem with diabetes. I've got to say with some pleasure that, I believe next Friday, Minister Smitherman is going to be coming up to Moose Factory to officially open our dialysis unit. It has taken a lot of years. As the member for Timmins-James Bay, we've been working with Weeneebayko hospital and James Bay General Hospital and other people in the health field in the area for a long time to try to get this dialysis system and up and running and funded. I give the government credit for having listened to the arguments we've made and for finally having funded the dialysis system at the Weeneebayko General Hospital in Moose Factory. I can

tell you, it makes a huge difference. It means that those people who live in the Moosonee, Moose Factory area are able to stay home. They don't have to travel and live in Timmins or wherever it might be to survive. That's really what it comes down to: You're not able to survive without dialysis if needed.

Obviously it's still a problem for communities further up the coast, because there are no dialysis services in communities like Fort Albany, Kashechewan or wherever it might be. One of the things we're going to have to think about as we move forward in the integration of our health care system in the James Bay—as members in this House know, we are now in a process of merging the federal hospital, Weeneebayko General, and the provincial hospital, James Bay General Hospital, into one provincial system. It's high time we did that because I think the federal government is abysmal at running things. When it comes to running hospitals, schools or reserves, you just need to travel in my constituency to find out the degree to which they're ill-suited to manage those services. We have very competent, hard-working people in our aboriginal education system and in the Weeneebayko General Hospital. Pat Chilton, for example, as the executive director, has done an amazing job. But the federal government, I believe, is not well suited to support the work that needs to be done in health care on the James Bay.

I really and truly believe that at the end of the day, integration is the way to go in the provincial system for a couple of reasons: (1) These people are residents of Ontario and they should be part of the provincial hospital system; and (2) the province has the wherewithal to run hospitals. We understand health care because we are the deliverers of health care in Ontario. The federal government is not. They are sort of at the edges of the system. I think we'd be better served.

The key is, we need to make sure the federal government, on the transfer of the hospitals to the province, doesn't just all of a sudden walk away from its fiduciary responsibility and say, "Well, too bad, so sad. Now it's a provincial hospital. We're not giving you any more money." They have a fiduciary responsibility to First Nations and we need to keep the dollars on an annual basis in the budget. The dollars that the province brings into the system can then be used to do real health care planning, such as making sure all of our communities on the James Bay have proper health facilities.

For example, there's no long-term care. Imagine if there were no long-term-care services in the community you live in, and once you need them, you have to move out of your community. That happens in some of our communities. It's just down the highway, and kids can go visit their moms and dads 50 or 60 miles away. If you live in Peawanuk, Martin Falls, Kashechewan or wherever it might be and you need long-term-care service or to live in an institution, you've got to travel out of the community and go to Timmins, Cochrane or wherever it is.

For families, it's traumatic. You're basically talking about a person in their 70s or 80s, who was born on the

land, who speaks Cree and probably doesn't speak very much English. A lot of people don't realize that. Many of my constituents don't speak English. Their language is Cree or Ojibwa. All of a sudden, they're put into a setting where nobody speaks their language. They don't have any of their friends with them in the institution and they find themselves very lonely and, quite frankly, die a lot quicker. They're away from their families, and that's the key thing.

As we move to an integrated provincial health system, we are able to plan and make sure that we have long-term-care beds in provincial institutions that are already existing, in places like Fort Albany and Attawapiskat, but also make sure that those types of services are available as we take over the federal system in Kashechewan, Martin Falls, Peawanuk and those places, making sure that services like dialysis are available in those communities as well.

I say to the member, a job well done. You will have our support. We think this is a good bill. We will support you through the process. I only hope this bill not only gets second reading but ends up as a bill that gets passed. It's going to take a lot of work, as you know, Mr. Gravelle. You've been here a long time. You understand, as I do, the difficulty and challenges in being able to get a private member's bill passed. Whatever we can do from our side of the House to help you, we are more than pleased to do so. I have to say that we've not always been on the same side on all issues. Certainly on the forestry file, we're miles apart.

Mr. Gravelle: No, we're not.

Mr. Bisson: Well, you may not be apart. This goes back to my original point that sometimes when you're in government, you've got to keep quiet. The point is that I think this is one we can work together on. Private members' hour is one of those times when we demonstrate that members of all parties are able to work well together—even though we might be sparring on other issues—for the better good of not only the constituents of your riding but, at the end of the day, the constituents of my riding and everybody else's. I congratulate you for bringing in this bill.

Mr. Craiton: I had the pleasure and honour of speaking to this bill when it was originally introduced in April 2004, so I'm grateful to have the opportunity, along with five of my colleagues, to speak on the bill again.

Congratulations to the member from Thunder Bay—Superior North, Michael Gravelle, for bringing this bill forward. I think every day in the hallway we bump into each other and the first thing I ask Michael—and he'll tell you—is, "How are we doing? Where's it going?"

1040

When I spoke on this bill the first time, I mentioned a couple of names. One was Patrick Cummings, a very close friend of mine for the 10 years I sat on city council. Patrick had diabetes and has since passed away. That's when I really learned what diabetes was all about. I also mentioned an e-mail that I received back then from a Wendy Anderson, who said the passage of the bill is a

life-and-death issue for her and the insulin pump therapy is a necessity, not a choice.

I want to add a couple of other faces and voices to this bill. My good friend Al Greatrix from Niagara Falls has diabetes. My wife's brother, who is seriously ill, is a diabetic.

I recently received a letter from Susan Crane of Niagara Falls. I spoke to her, and she's given me permission to read into Hansard her comments to me. She writes:

"Mr. Craitor

"I am a single mother of three daughters. The youngest daughter (age 13) is an asthmatic and type 1 diabetic.

"It is very difficult for me to understand why it is taking so long for Bill 55 to have its second reading. People with type 1 diabetes have not chosen this medical condition, but the cost in controlling it is huge. I cannot understand why our government, whom I think the world of, cannot get this bill passed through so that children with diabetes can get medicines free.

"My daughter's syringes cost \$1 apiece, four times a day. Multiply that by 30 days per month and the cost is out of this world. My family and I will go without a lot of things to ensure she is kept healthy.

"We have approached all of the service clubs in Niagara Falls to ask for their assistance in obtaining a pump. A pump would enhance her young life and give her more freedom to do some of the things her friends are able to do. Thus far we have received a \$1,000 donation from the Niagara Falls Kiwanis Club. The total cost of the insulin pump is \$6,600.

"I don't know if you can help to push this bill through the parliamentary procedures, but if you can it would mean a lot to her and our family."

I know this assembly is listening. I know it wants to help.

I will also share with the House that two weeks ago the Minister of Finance was in St. Catharines and conducted a round table meeting to discuss our upcoming budget. A young lady made an excellent presentation about insulin pumps. I will also tell you that I could tell the minister was moved, and in fact commented on the bill.

So in closing, I just want to say it's a good start. I'm totally in support of it. Congratulations again to the member for bringing it forward.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I am pleased to rise today to speak in support once again, this time on Bill 15, the private member's bill from the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North which would amend the Health Insurance Act to allow the insulin pump and supplies for the pump to become insured services.

I've had many people come to me in the riding to speak about this bill. We're following it with the Lindsay chapter of the Canadian Diabetes Association—Anne Rink was past president there—but also from the Peterborough area. I'm sure the member for Peterborough has been approached many times by people in his area supporting this.

In January, Mrs. Brown, a constituent of mine, had to quit work in order to look after her child who has diabetes. She wasn't able to get an insulin pump for her; she was a very brittle diabetic, which means unstable. She had to make changes in their lifestyle just to look after her daughter, who could have been assisted by an insulin pump. Her daughter could have much more independence, and thus she herself could have more independence to go back to work etc.

We've written to Mr. Smitherman through the Canadian Diabetes Association, and I'm hoping the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North and other members can pressure the government to bring this to committee so we can have a fulsome discussion about the insulin pump.

The insulin pump itself controls the blood sugar level. I don't know if the member for Simcoe North held up the pump. It's a small device with a catheter. It monitors the sugar level and delivers the insulin accordingly, so people don't have to watch the clock; their lifestyles can be more flexible.

Ron and Cathy Millen in my riding have a son who has a demanding university schedule. This has helped eliminate the chronic high and low blood glucose levels that occur with him. They paid thousands of dollars to assist their son's medical needs, and they're hoping the bill is passed. He's going to be graduating soon, if he can go on to afford that, because it will affect what jobs he chooses and his whole quality of life.

George and Dott Heath from my riding, both diabetics who volunteer with the Canadian Diabetes Association, have e-mailed me in support.

Certainly, in my career as a nurse, I've seen many diabetic highs and lows and how diabetes affects people and their lifestyles. Even recently, in my profession now as an MPP, I still do a lot of medical calls when I'm out in public because they are affected. They're passing out in public. They do have unstable levels. So it's all around us.

We're trying to let Ontarians lead healthy, more productive lives. Statistics have shown the increase in diabetes that is going to be happening. Diabetes is the leading cause of heart disease, kidney disease and blindness in Ontario. More than 850,000 Ontarians, which is 7% of the population—when you think about it, it's quite a lot—have this disease. They account for 32% of the heart attacks, 43% of heart failure cases, 30% of strokes, 51% of new dialysis patients and 70% of amputations. Just last week, or maybe even this week, the amputations that occur were on the news—diabetics not being able to see their lower extremities, especially, facing amputations that could have been prevented. Being able to monitor their blood glucose levels in a more effective way would certainly improve their circulation and save amputations down the road. So that's getting more prominence in the news, the costs to the health care system, which the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North gave very good statistics on. Certainly, I believe the ounce of prevention, the money put forward now, will save the cost to the health care system down the road.

Gilles Bisson mentioned how so few private members' bills get passed. I was fortunate enough this year to have one of my private member's bills get passed, and only 2% get passed. But it's a great morning when we do non-partisan work and try to improve the quality of life for all people in Ontario.

Later this afternoon, at the Speaker's will, I'm going to present petitions on behalf of the member from Simcoe North. There are thousands of petitions. I thank Paul Beckwith, Glen Heatherington, Karen Lynn and Melanie Hellstern for obtaining these signatures.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I too rise in support of this initiative. When a person with the integrity of the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North asks you to offer a few words, the only possible response is to agree. I've always found that the sponsor of the bill has never had to worry about giving a speech that will bring people to their feet, for his wise and thoughtful words have always served to bring people to their senses. Today is no exception.

Simply put, the bill presented makes sense. It makes sense because diabetics suffer if their disease becomes unmanageable. In simple truth, research on the utility and effectiveness of insulin pumps in achieving and maintaining optimal glycemic control requires us to concede that no diabetes strategy can be comprehensive if it fails to acknowledge the importance and then ensure the broad-base use of insulin pump technology. The benefits of continuous insulin infusion with an insulin pump have been well documented.

That said, the good member from Thunder Bay-Superior North has already provided a comprehensive overview of the serious complications which can result from a failure in disease management. The costs to our health care system are both staggering and growing. In Ontario, there are about 6,500 children who live with insulin-dependent diabetes. On average, each child living with insulin-dependent diabetes will cost our health care system more than \$200,000, the result of disease complications. Contrasting this cost to the cost of the pump and supplies, which the member has outlined, suggests at least a 10 to one health care payback through the early provision and use of insulin pump technology. Investing these dollars to ensure proper disease management will enhance the future of these children and allow them to live healthier, happier, more productive lives. In short, it would be money well spent.

1050

Allow me to close by quoting the words of a friend, the Right Reverend Dr. Tommy Douglas, who said, "If, instead of flowers, we could plant a beautiful thought in the heart of a friend, that would be to give as the angels give." Today we have an exciting opportunity indeed to give as the angels give, to move forward with the beautiful thought placed in the heart of this assembly this morning. Thank you, Michael.

Today we can ensure that the road less travelled becomes the more common path and avoid the fate of Robert Frost's hired hand who, in the end, "Had nothing

to look back on with pride nor forward to with hope." I implore all members of this assembly to act with resolve to embrace this wonderful initiative.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It really is an honour for me to say a few words today in support of Bill 15 and support my good friend the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North. Today in our audience we have a number of fourth-year nursing students from Trent University: Nicole Anderson, Julia Wadsworth, Lai Jeet Yeo, Amarpreet Sikand, Melissa Bennett, Jennifer Nash, Spring Numan and Meredith Alexander. These individuals have been circulating a petition in my community of Peterborough to bring forth support for Bill 15. My friend from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock has mentioned the son of Ron and Cathy Millen, who I know very well, and Dorothy MacDonald, the executive director of the local diabetes chapter in my riding of Peterborough.

In bringing this bill forward today, the member is truly part of the great legacy of Thunder Bay-Superior North, along with C.D. Howe, Robert Andras, Lyn McLeod and others. There is a great tradition of leadership from that part of northwestern Ontario, and this fulfills that great legacy.

Secondly, I believe that Bill 15 is just a logical extension of the legacy here in Ontario of Banting and Best, to bring forward and support this bill to have OHIP support these insulin pumps.

I want to talk about the two First Nations communities in the riding of Peterborough. Chief Greg Cowie, of Hiawatha First Nations community, and chief Keith Knott, from Curve Lake First Nations community, in fact have shown leadership roles as Peterborough has had the opportunity to work with the Kashechewan people in the last number of weeks. They've certainly indicated to me that diabetes is a very serious problem in their communities and they see the funding, through OHIP, of this pump as a very significant step forward in order to manage diabetes in their communities. When you look at the statistics, over a million people in Ontario with either diagnosed diabetes or undiagnosed diabetes is a very serious situation, causing \$2.1 billion in health care costs in Ontario. I think funding the insulin pump through OHIP would be a dramatic step forward to manage this difficulty.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm honoured and privileged this morning to stand up and support Bill 15, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act. The honourable member from Thunder Bay-Superior North, for the second time in this place, has brought forward an important initiative, an important bill, that will affect thousands and thousands of people across Ontario.

Before we start talking about this bill, let me introduce the people who came from London to be with us this morning to watch the debate about this important bill: Jannet Mundt, Jennifer Kish and Christine Turner. Thank you for coming from London.

Along with the wonderful people from London, many other people from the province of Ontario are watching

us today to see how this debate is going to unfold. I believe this initiative is very important for many families, for many kids, for many people who want to live their lives normally, like everybody else, like you and I. They're going to wake up in the morning healthy, they can go to work, and they can be productive in our community. That's why I am supporting this bill, because the insulin pump is a very important initiative, a very important technique to give us a positive initiative to keep us alive, going to work and doing whatever we want with comfort.

Also, many people talked about it from both sides of the House, from three different parties: Liberal, Conservative and NDP. I believe that everyone is going to support it.

I know the insulin pump is going to cost the government, the Ministry of Health, some kind of money at the beginning. But in the end, in the long run, this will save health care a lot of money, and not just money, but also to create a way for the diabetic people in this province to live their lives normally, like everyone else.

I learned from many people who spoke before me that there are almost a million people who are diabetic in this province, who suffer from this disease. Many people are looking at us today, especially today, to support them, and they want us to pass this bill.

I feel that this bill is going to pass in the future, hopefully. It was first introduced by our Minister of Finance when he was in opposition in 2003. Second, it was also introduced last year by the honourable member from Thunder Bay–Superior North, who has again presented it in this House, seeking support from many members of this House.

I believe that passing this bill will mean a lot to all of us, it will mean a lot to our health care, and it will mean a lot to many thousands of people in this province. I want to continue supporting this bill, and hopefully we will see the passage of it.

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): It is also my pleasure to speak this bill. As others have mentioned, we've spoken to it before. I hope to speak to it again, but at third reading this time rather than second reading. I think the fact that it's back before this Legislature is a wonderful tribute to Michael Gravelle; Michael proves that good things do come in small packages. Thank you, Michael.

It's also a tribute to parents, grandparents and community advocates who have not let this bill go away, because they know the goodness that exists within it.

As engineers, when we design a structure, one of the factors we have to consider is, what happens if the structure fails; what are the implications? So when I look at a bill I say, what happens if this bill doesn't pass? It's difficult at times for governments to find funding for what are truly preventive programs, because there isn't that immediate payback that you can calculate and say, "Boy, it's going to save this many dollars." They're long term. But if this bill fails, what are the long-term costs? Let's look initially just at money down the road.

I have been told that if an individual has a heart attack, it's basically \$100,000 when they enter the hospital and the bill goes up from there; insulin pumps substantially reduce that. Vision: The loss of vision for the individual is a loss of independence. It's not just not being able to read but it's losing their independence. There is a high rate of amputations among individuals with diabetes. There's the need for dialysis. All of these represent dollar losses to our province and represent independence loss to our individuals. But folks, to the province it represents the loss of the talents and the contributions that these individuals would have been better able to make had they had not suffered this. From a financial viewpoint, the pumps are a pretty small cost.

All of us are lobbied on a regular basis. When I was first appointed, I was lobbied about insulin pumps, but the impact was really made on me when I was at an event and saw a child with an insulin pump. I know that juvenile diabetes affects more than children, but my first contact was with a young man wearing an insulin pump. I realized that this pump enabled that person to live the same life as all his peers and colleagues, to take part in sports and not go through the challenges of having the needles all the time.

I believe that a child has a right to a childhood. This insulin pump bill, when passed, will enable children to have the childhood they deserve. It will enable them to take part in all the activities and to live as close to a normal life as humanly possible.

I hope, as all of us do, that ultimately a cure for diabetes will be found. But, folks, we have the opportunity here to make life better for innumerable children and adults in this province, and we must not waste this opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Gravelle, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Mr. Gravelle: I want to begin by thanking my colleagues who spoke today and all others for being so articulate, so passionate and so supportive of this legislation, particularly the members for Simcoe North, Timmins–James Bay, Niagara Falls, Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot, Peterborough, London–Fanshawe, and Prince Edward–Hastings. You all were wonderful and I appreciate the great support.

I am most grateful to the Canadian Diabetes Association and the Ontario Diabetes Action Partnership for the great support you've shown. I mean, you won't give up. You shouldn't give up, and we won't give up as well. We believe this is something very important that should happen, and I'm really confident that we're going to succeed.

I don't want this to be misunderstood, but sometimes when you're in this business, when you're a politician, you feel like you are spinning your wheels or you feel like you're not accomplishing a great deal. I must admit, when I first became involved with this particular issue and brought it forward as a private member's bill, I did recognize that this was going to have a positive impact

on a lot of people in the province. It would be something that would make a true difference. Truly, that is why we all come here. We come to Queen's Park or get into elected office or seek public office because we truly want to make a difference. I think that goes for all people of all parties. This is something that, if we are successful not only in getting passage today but in getting our government to support it—very soon, we hope—will make a huge difference in people's lives. That does make a difference. So I thank you all.

I do want to thank those people who came here to try to lend that support. I'm thinking of Zachary Smith and Lyla-Kay Collins. Thank you so much. I know the pump has made a real difference, and I also know what a challenge it has been for you to manage the costs. Hopefully today, with the tremendous support we've received, we will be successful in seeing things change and this legislation will go through and the pump will be available through OHIP in the future. Thank you so much, everybody.

1100

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(DRINKING AND BOATING
OFFENCES), 2005
LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(INFRACTIONS RELATIVES À L'ALCOOL
ET À LA NAVIGATION DE PLAISANCE)

Mr. Zimmer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 209, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to the suspension of drivers' licences / Projet de loi 209, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les suspensions de permis de conduire.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Zimmer, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): Bill 209 is aimed at saving lives and preventing bodily injury and ensuring boat safety. As a society, we now understand the message that driving a car while impaired is dangerous. Through the hard work of organizations like MADD Canada, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and our law enforcement authorities, the message has been clear: If you drink, don't drive. As well, through a strategic campaign of advertisements, RIDE programs and punitive deterrents within our justice system, the culture of Ontarians has been changed and impaired driving is now considered antisocial behaviour. The result has been that thousands of lives have been saved and thousands of injuries have been prevented.

But there is another alcohol-related issue that has long been ignored. Driving an automobile or a snowmobile while impaired has been deemed unacceptable behaviour, but driving a motorboat on our vast waterways seems to have escaped this labelling. Every boating season, there

are serious accidents involving boating and alcohol. Lives are lost needlessly due to impaired boaters. I'm a cottager. I am familiar with the lakes and waterways of our province, as are many, many other Ontarians. Unfortunately, it's not unusual for individuals to choose to operate a motorboat while impaired. The attitude that it is acceptable to operate a motor vessel while impaired is prevalent among many boaters.

Alcohol and recreational boating is an extremely bad mixture. Alcohol impairs cognitive function, judgment and reaction time, and diminishes an individual's ability to survive in cold water. Yet society maintains a much greater level of tolerance for riskier behaviour in boats than in motor vehicles. According to a Red Cross report that looked at drownings between 1991 and 2000, the statistics are even more appalling. Between 1991 and 1995, 26% of drowning victims were above the legal alcohol limit. Between 1996 and 2000, 23% of drowning victims were above the legal limit. Boating and alcohol, snowmobiling and alcohol and the non-use of personal flotation devices accounted for a significant number of these drowning fatalities.

Over the summer break I had the opportunity to visit police units around the province in order to understand the perspective of local authorities. Whether I was in Peel, Bracebridge or Orillia, the message was clear: We need to change the culture that believes drinking and boating is acceptable.

The Ontario Provincial Police statistics effectively illustrate the extent of this problem. Between April 2003 and December 2003, the OPP marine units issued almost 2,000 charges and warnings involving the use of alcohol and boats. During that same period, 33 impaired boating charges or warnings were issued; 33 Criminal Code charges were also issued regarding blood alcohol of more than 80 milligrams per 100 litres of blood.

Here are the facts: 37% of boaters in Canada admit to consuming alcohol on every boat trip; 66% report that they drink alcohol sometimes while boating. Alcohol is a factor in over 40% of recreational boating fatalities. These statistics about the dangers of impaired boating are compelling by themselves, but it is sometimes easy to detach ourselves from the numbers. It is very difficult to ignore the personal tragedies that are faced by families across the province who lose their loved ones to individuals who are driving a boat while impaired.

Pete Crompton, for instance, a 27-year-old man, died tragically two years ago in a boat collision where alcohol was a factor. Ken Crompton, Pete's father, inspired the introduction of this bill. I spoke at length to him. No family should have to endure the loss of a loved one due to the impairment of a boater. I'm committed to ensuring that something positive emerges from the loss that families suffer, such as the Cromptons have had to face.

What will the bill do? The premise of this bill is based on the belief that there should not be a distinction between an impaired driver of an automobile and an impaired operator of a powered vessel. When an individual chooses to drink and drive in any vehicle, they become a weapon and they put the safety of others at risk.

Bill 209, if passed, will amend the Highway Traffic Act so that the penalties that apply to individuals convicted of impaired driving of an automobile will also apply to boaters who drive powered vessels while impaired. Right now, law enforcement authorities have the ability to issue convictions for drinking and boating, but for law enforcement, spotting an impaired boater is much more difficult than spotting an impaired automobile driver. Therefore, it is important that there is an effective deterrent that will prevent boaters from drinking in the first place. As well, theoretically, if an individual who is convicted of driving a motor vessel while impaired is brought ashore by the local police, there is nothing preventing them from going to their car and driving away, in spite of their alcohol-related conviction, because their driver's licence is still in effect.

This bill is about giving law enforcement authorities the tools they need to effectively address this problem. It's about giving the municipalities, especially those municipalities on our waterways and in cottage country, the tools to further ensure the safety of citizens and tourists. It's about ensuring that the millions of tourists and Ontario residents who enjoy boating can go out on our waterways without having to fear for their lives due to impaired boaters.

If passed, this bill will (1) suspend the driver's licence of individuals convicted of an alcohol-related offence while operating a vessel; (2) give enforcement authorities the ability to enact 12-hour driver's licence suspensions if persons are caught operating a vessel while under the influence of alcohol; and (3) the registrar of motor vehicles will be able to enact an immediate 90-day suspension of a driver's licence for an offence involving alcohol and the operation of a vessel.

1110

This legislation is long overdue, and it is not the first time it has been introduced. Bills similar to Bill 209 have been introduced at least four times in this Legislature, and each time the bill has died on the order paper, despite support from all political parties.

I want to thank my colleagues in the House for considering this bill. I hope you will be able to review this bill expeditiously so that I can introduce it.

As legislators, we have a responsibility to ensure safety on Ontario's waterways and roads. People who drink and boat present a safety risk not only in a boat but also if they choose to get into their car following the conviction or a warning for a boating offence. As a province, we do suspend drivers' licences for offences such as non-payment of child support and impaired operation of a snowmobile, so there is no reason why we can't do the same for drinking and driving on the water.

I have been around the province. I have heard from all the police enforcement agencies that operate on or near our waterways. I have had communications from virtually all of the cottage owners' associations, the marine operators' associations—anybody having to do with boats and recreation, whether it was down in the Niagara Peninsula, in Lake Huron, in western Ontario, up in Lake

Superior, in the Kawarthas, in the Muskokas. I've had extensive, huge e-mail response to this. All of the stakeholders, to a person, support this legislation, for the reasons that I've said. I can tell this House that there is one exception: I received an e-mail from someone in northern Ontario—one e-mail out of hundreds and hundreds—that objected to the legislation and said, in effect, "I go out fishing every morning at about eight o'clock, and I have done for 50 years. I've always taken six bottles of beer with me, and I don't intend stopping that." With that one exception, there has been across-the-board support for this legislation.

I can say in the House that I've talked to my colleagues in the Conservative Party and in the New Democratic Party, and I'm thankful for the support that I've received from those caucuses on this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I look forward to debating Bill 209 and the member from Willowdale's presentation.

Opposition's role is to bring forward a lot of questions so that hopefully we can get some answers when bills like this come forward. At the outset, I should say that we'll be supporting the bill.

The member from Willowdale spoke in his opening comments regarding power vessels. We'd like to know what's going to take place when you deal with canoes or sculling vessels, which are the rowing ones, or the rowboats in those actions as well, because it specifically deals with power vessels. What takes place there?

Also, we wonder why ATVs or Argos, those eight-wheeled vehicles, and the other ones that are coming forward now—the member probably realizes that they're under the HTA, or the Highway Traffic Act, but there is currently a movement to have them removed from the Highway Traffic Act. The reason for that is for insurance purposes. According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, they have to follow the guidelines for the Highway Traffic Act for ATVs and Argos and all those other vehicles for insurance purposes. In order to get changes in the way they can be insured in the same fashion that snowmobiles have been removed from the Highway Traffic Act, ATVs and other vehicles are trying to be removed. We should probably look at that aspect as well for future considerations of what's going to happen in those areas.

Some of the things: What takes place with an individual who doesn't have a driver's licence? You're required to have a boating licence, and I'm going to get into that very shortly, but there's no requirement to have a driver's licence to be out utilizing a power vessel or a canoe or the other ones that we mentioned there. We'd like to know what the intent is, if there is any, to look at those aspects as well.

We realize that the member is trying to move forward. Anything that can take place to make our waterways safer, we'll certainly support.

The licensing aspect is another one. I met with the federal members who were on the committee when the

federal licensing issue took place. I'm sure the member knows that, according to the Canada act from 1982, licensing is retained by the provinces. The provinces are the ones who are supposed to have licensing ability. The committee members were saying that should this federal boating licence go to court, it probably doesn't have a leg to stand on and they expected it to be challenged—so something to ensure that the federal licensing component is reviewed.

Another aspect, of course, is that we get a lot of bills like this, and we need to know where the funds are, or who has the ability to enforce the laws. Conservation officers are constantly checking fishing limits, they're checking fishing licences and those sort of aspects as well, but they don't have the authority to deal with anything outside the Game and Fish Act. They have no authority under the Highway Traffic Act or any other aspects. They are currently seeking that, but then again, they move away from conservation officers dealing with specific aspects of the Game and Fish Act to dealing with all sorts of policing aspects. The way it stands now is that they can detain that individual and have an officer come on to move forward with other charges, and whether that's drinking or other aspects of activity that are illegal, they will be able to deal with that as well.

There are a lot of other boating issues that need to be addressed as well. I know a key one that we get responses from individuals on is whether or not this monitoring of boat speeds will be taken into consideration in one shape or form. Believe it or not, there are limits for individuals and the speed they drive, particularly close to shores, where the wake will actually wash away the shore and cause degradation of those shorelines. It causes a lot of problems with docks and the boats that are out there smashing against the docks and those sort of things.

Some of the other considerations as well: We realize that alcohol is a very serious issue, and anything that we can do along those lines we'd be very supportive of and we will move forward on.

I've given the member a number of key questions regarding these issues: the licensing aspect, the enforcement aspect, the funds to enforce, the other areas that potentially should be looked at, whether it's canoes, sculling vessels, ATVs, Argos and all those other vessels that are looked at being removed from the Highway Traffic Act. We'd certainly appreciate some information or some insight on what potential impacts might be there or could be looked at for amendments at that time.

Hopefully we can get it forward. We will be supporting it, as I said, in moving it to committee so a lot of these issues can be brought forward by groups and organizations that are directly impacted or work with individuals who participate in these recreational activities.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): First let me say, as the critic for the New Democratic Party for the Ministries of Natural Resources and Transportation, that we will be supporting this bill, because we believe, as does the member, that people should be responsible.

People should not be operating a motorboat or vehicle or anything else when they're intoxicated. It's a danger to themselves and, quite frankly, a danger to others. I think that goes without debate.

I want to put something on the record, because we know that in the future, when this item is brought to court, if somebody gets charged under that, some lawyers are going to go back and take a look at the record of when we had the debate and what the intent was. I want to put a couple of issues on the record and I want people to not misunderstand where I'm going, because it's a bit of a controversial issue.

One of the complaints that I get from people in my constituency quite a bit is that there's this sense in northern Ontario—northern members will know what I'm talking about—that there is less and less of an ability these days to live the life that we traditionally have lived in northern Ontario. People move to northern Ontario because the work is good; they enjoy the lifestyle. In compensation for being further away from the centre of the universe, which happens to be Toronto, you have a positive, which is that you have the outdoors, so people can enjoy themselves when it comes to fishing or hunting, camping, skidooing or whatever it might be.

There has been a move over the past number of years to where it is becoming more and more restrictive for people to participate in those actions. For example, we look at the issue of the moose hunt. Moose hunting is something that is in the blood of people in northern Ontario. It's something that we've always done. My earliest memories as a child were of my father taking my brother and me out hunting. I've got pictures at home where I'm out with my dad; I'm like three years old out in the bush and we're looking for partridge or going along with dad in the afternoon on a cruise of the timbered areas to look for moose. It becomes part of our culture. It's the kind of thing that maybe a lot of people who don't live in northern Ontario don't understand, but it becomes our ethos; it becomes part of what we are.

What has happened over the years is that many of those things that we have done for years are being taken away, or there's a perception that they are being taken away. For example, on the moose hunt, it's almost impossible to get a moose tag these days. I was in the moose tag draw for 10 years and never got drawn, so I finally gave up. I got rid of my guns and said, "To heck with it; I'm not doing it any more," because I'm frustrated that I can't get a moose tag.

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The other part is that, as a person who likes to hunt—and I don't hunt any more—I found it was becoming more and more restrictive. The ministry officers, the game wardens, are in the bush with the OPP. You would think, for God's sake, there's a bunch of criminals running around in the bush. Go in during hunting or fishing season; it's absolutely amazing the presence the MNR has out in the bush.

I understand, as a responsible citizen, there's a reason why they're there. We need to make sure people don't

break the law, that people are not out poaching, not doing things that are a danger to themselves or others, etc. I understand all of that. But there's this real sense that the thing we have taken for granted as northerners, the outdoors, is becoming more and more difficult to do because it's becoming more and more restrictive as we pass more and more laws through this provincial Legislature. The complaint and the comment I get from a lot of people, not only in my constituency but from across northern Ontario—and I'm sure if you talk to other northerners, you'll get the same—is that people are becoming extremely frustrated.

In the context of this bill, I want to put a couple of things on the record in the context of what I've just said. People really feel as if things are starting to get a little bit crazy.

For example, last summer I had an older couple in their 50s—actually they're retired, so they might even be in their 60s—come to my office totally beside themselves. They said, "I don't believe this. We've had a cottage on this particular lake for 35 years. Every Saturday night my wife and I, after the kids were old enough that we could leave them alone, would get on our boat and go fishing. We'd fish for an hour, catch a pickerel or two, bring them back and we'd have ourselves a little fish fry."

Every time they'd go, they'd bring a beer with them. They're sitting out in the middle of the lake. They're not hurting anybody. They're responsible individuals who happen to have a beer while they're fishing. What happens? These people are on their boat in front of their cottage. They go out, and who shows up? The MNR along with the OPP. They get charged because they've got two beers in the boat.

I understand people will say, "My God, you shouldn't be drinking and driving." Yes, I agree with you too. I get in my car, for example, and drive from my home to my buddy's place and he gives me a beer; I'm not over the limit. As long as you're under the limit and you're able to drive it's not illegal. You have to be responsible, and you drive back. If you go and have two, three or four beers and you're over the limit, of course you don't drive. You take a cab or get somebody to drive you home.

The point this couple was making and why they were beside themselves—they said, "Here we are for 35 years on this lake and we get charged on our lake for having a beer while we're fishing. What have we done wrong? Have we become criminals?"

I get similar stories from other constituents when it comes to incidences they've had as far as contact with the MNR and the OPP.

Here's a good one. This one's beyond me. A friend of mine, Bob Courchesne in Fauquier, Ontario—I think it was Bob's daughter; I hope I get this right. Bob Courchesne's daughter—at the time she was about 14 or 15—and her friends, as I did, grew up in the outdoors. They wanted to go ice fishing. Bob's got an ice hut out on a lake in behind Fauquier. As all kids: "Dad, can we use the skidoo and go ice fishing?" "Of course, not a

problem." They have a licence. She and her friends get on the skidoo, go out in the bush and get to the lake. Here are three young girls, 14 years old, doing nothing wrong but fishing in an ice hut. Who showed up? The MNR with the OPP. They said, "Get out of the ice hut. We think you guys have got drugs."

It's 30 below zero. Three 14-year-olds are just beside themselves because they don't use drugs and they're doing something that, quite frankly, we should encourage our children to do, and that is, to be responsible young people. They just happened to be ice fishing. They're told to get out of the hut. The MNR and the OPP went in and stripped down the hut. They searched the girls and found no drugs, then left everything on the ice and left.

So Bob gives me a call and says, "Gilles, what the heck is going on when our kids can't go in the bush—they're searched by the OPP and because they happen to be 14 years old, they're drug users? Give me a break."

I say to the member who introduces the bill, I agree with you that people should not be intoxicated driving any kind of vehicle. I'm a pilot, and I well know. The point is, we need to be very careful when we do these things that we don't set them up in such a way that restricts people's ability to do what is part of the natural cycle of things in a place called northern Ontario. I would argue it's probably the case in many other parts of Ontario. I'm familiar with where I come from.

Other stories: Another friend of mine, Len Pigeon, who used to have a cottage two or three over from us and actually used to live there, and his buddy Leo Belec would go trout fishing, on this lake we call Winter Lake, in the wintertime, a really nice lake. We've got nice lakes there, if anybody's watching. It's in behind the Kamiskotia River. Anyway, the point is that he goes out fishing with Leo. They're two retired guys and they're going to go ice fishing.

I'm sorry, but if I'm going to go ice fishing, I know I would bring with me a little mickey of rye or some wine or a couple of beers. I'm going to be out there for the day. So I'm going to get my machine, load up my skidoo and put it on the trailer. I'm going to drive up the dirt road to get to where the lake is. My buddy and me are going to take the machine out, we're going to go out fishing and, yes, we're going to have a couple of beers. But I'm there for the whole afternoon. I'm not over the limit.

What happens to him? He gets a RIDE program in the middle of the bush, for God's sake. I understand if there's a RIDE program on Highway 11, but a RIDE program in the middle of a dirt road? Well, it happens to be covered with snow. What are we thinking? What's the OPP up to and what's the MNR up to? They're sending a signal. Yes, I agree that we need to be responsible and people need to know that they can get caught if they're impaired; that's how we prevent people from drinking and driving. But again, the same thing: They were pulled over; the MNR and the OPP told them to strip the truck. They took everything out of the truck and basically checked everything. They saw that they had four bottles

of beer. Thank God the bottles of beer happened to be in the back of the pickup truck, because if they'd been in the truck, they probably would have been charged. I would tend to put them inside my truck because I don't want them to freeze. It's 40 below zero when I go ice fishing for trout in January. Anyway, the point being, everything is thrown out on to the side of the road. They're made to feel as if they're doing something wrong. Then the OPP and the MNR say, "Be careful," and they leave all the stuff on the ground and away they go.

I go out to the lake the following weekend, to do what I normally do at the lake, to cut some wood or whatever, and Len comes over to my driveway. He is just jumping this high off the ground. He says, "All my life I've lived up here." Then he says, "I'm going to get pulled over by these guys in the middle of the bush. They think I'm some kind of criminal because I happen to be going ice fishing and I've got four beers in the back of my truck. What's going on here?" Following that, he said that he had to pick up all of the stuff and put it back into the truck himself.

For the record—because I know at some point this will be looked at in the transcript of a trial when somebody is charged—yes, we need to do what is right to make sure that people don't drink and drive in any kind of vehicle. As New Democrats, we agree with that. But we need to be sending a message to our police services and MNR that—I don't want to use a word that's too strong; I was going to use the phrase "police state," and that would have been way over the top—they have a responsibility, yes, to make sure that the laws are followed, but at the same time, we should not be doing it in such a way that gives people the feeling that they're being restricted from being able to do what they normally do. I just say that we need to be mindful of that.

Yes, we as New Democrats will support your bill, because we agree with you that there should be a penalty if you're found to be drinking and driving. I don't care what the vehicle is. That is a danger. People shouldn't be doing it, and we should not condone it. We have to be very clear that there are severe penalties if that happens. If it means losing your driver's licence, so be it. I have no problem with that.

But for the record, I want to be very clear that the MNR, the conservation officers, along with the Ontario Provincial Police, need to get a talking to. Somebody's got to sit down with these people and say, "Just cool your jets." Yes, there's nothing wrong with you being out there and having a presence. You have to be there in order to watch what's going on. But in your contact with people, you need to be mindful that they are citizens of this province; they are not a bunch of criminals. They happen to be people who live in northern Ontario who like to ice fish, who like to fish in the summer or skidoo or whatever it is. Yes, if I'm going to go ice fishing, I'm bringing two beers with me; I've always done that. But don't treat me as a criminal because I decide to bring two beers with my lunch as I go ice fishing for the day. I can sit in my home, have two beers, get in my truck at 6

o'clock at night and drive, and if I started having those beers at 12 o'clock in the afternoon, I'm not impaired. The issue is, yes, charge the person if they've been found to be impaired, charge the person if they've done something dangerous, charge them if they're doing something wrong, but don't go there and start penalizing people on the basis of just carrying out a regular activity that you would do as you enjoy the outdoors. I just want to say to the member, I think that has to be put on the record, because there is really a sense of frustration out there.

I would say that another one, a good friend of mine who runs a bait store, who my good friend Mr. Ouellette will know quite while—Roger Cauchon—is at wit's end. Every time I have a conversation with him, it's like, "So tell me what the ministry of no response is doing these days." He calls the MNR the "ministry of no response." He is frustrated, because here's a guy who's the second generation in the business of a sport shop supplying people bait, tackle—whatever they need to go hunting or fishing—and who has done a really good job at providing that service. Quite frankly, it's one of the premier businesses in that area in that particular sector.

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What he finds is that over the years, it has become increasingly difficult for him to make a living. Why? Because fewer and fewer people are using the outdoors for the very reason I stated just now, which is that the Ministry of Natural Resources—or, as he would call it, the ministry of no response—and the OPP think they're a bunch of Rambos when they go into the bush. As a result, people get frustrated. They stop fishing, they stop hunting, they stop doing the very things that we take for granted in northern Ontario. As a business person, he says, "My God, what are you doing? You're charging my people as if they're a bunch of criminals. All they wanted to do is go out and catch a couple of fish, maybe shoot a couple of partridges, go skidooing or whatever it might be, and they're being treated like criminals." He gets it day in and day out at his business when he's interacting with these people, because somebody will come into the bait shop, pick up half a dozen or a dozen minnows, take off to go fishing, and all of a sudden they come back and they've got some horror story about how they've been pulled over by the OPP or the MNR for no reason. I would understand if somebody gets pulled over because they seem to be doing something that is illegal, or they seem to be intoxicated and they were worried they might take control of a vehicle; I would understand that. But his complaint is the one I'm raising here, which is that people are just out there doing the regular stuff, they're just fishing, and you've got people being pulled over for no reason.

For the record, I just want to say that we really need to give a talking-to to the officials of both the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ontario Provincial Police to say, "Yes, you have a responsibility to enforce the laws of this province, but you need to do so with respect for the people you're in contact with. You should not see yourselves as the Rambos of the world. You should see

yourselves as what you are, professional conservation officers and OPP, who are there if there is a problem and to make sure the problem is dealt with, and not to create a problem by trying to treat people who are in contact with the outdoors, as Roger would say, as a bunch of criminals."

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm sad to say that one of the reasons for Bill 209 was the tragic death of Peter Crompton, 27 years old, on July 13 by the operator of a boat who had been drinking. I was also shocked to learn, and so were many of my friends when I told them, that the driver of a boat who's impaired is not treated the same as a driver of a motor vehicle. This bill simply will correct that by amending the Highway Traffic Act so that the penalties that apply to impaired drivers will apply to impaired boaters. If you drink, don't drive. Don't drive a car, don't drive a snowmobile and absolutely don't drive a boat.

We probably all know the song, "Summertime and the living is easy." A few beers on the dock of the bay can be a cool thing too. This is the romance of summertime on the water all over Ontario. Summer fun and a cool one is a lifestyle too well publicized every night on TV in fantasy ads. What is not glamorized is the death and destruction, the pain and suffering, the loss and anguish of one drink too many on our lakes and on our rivers that we see far too often on the 11 o'clock news. Boating and alcohol is a death warrant, a prescription no one wants to deliver to loved ones at home.

My riding of Niagara Falls is an island, with waterways on all four sides and the Welland River running through the centre. We're blessed by having Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, the Niagara River and the Welland Canal, and, like many Ontario communities, boating is one of the most popular recreational activities we have. Safe boating is a primary concern not just in my riding, but to everyone in Ontario.

The people in my riding certainly will support any legislation to make our waterways safer, especially after last summer, where we had the unfortunate incident of a loss of life on the Chippawa River. As a result of that, a public meeting was held at the Chippawa Lions Club on how to make boating safer on our rivers and in our community. I was pleased to attend that meeting and share Bill 209 with the public. I'm pleased to tell the House that all three city councils in my riding—the city of Niagara Falls, the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and the town of Thorold—passed resolutions in support of this bill.

Let's face it, alcohol impairs boaters. It's estimated that 50% to 60% of boating fatalities are alcohol-related. Alcohol impairs your coordination, balance, vision, judgment and reaction time. Vision provides us with more than 90% of the information we use while operating a boat. Alcohol impairs vision by causing loss of focus and side vision.

Let's be clear: We need to understand that alcohol affects you even more on the water. Alcohol and a motor-powered vehicle is a weapon of mass destruction—in the air, on land, on ice, on snow, and certainly in the water.

This province needs to amend the Highway Traffic Act to send a strong message that drinking and the operation of any motorized vehicle does not mix.

Not only do I support this bill but I'm strongly urging every member of this House, as I'm hearing from my own community, that we do the same thing. Hopefully this bill will be passed before this upcoming summer and take effect for the upcoming boating season.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak, Mr. Speaker. I congratulate the member for bringing it forward. I was present when Mr. Crompton was there and spoke to our committee. I would say it was a very emotional committee that I attended, having a parent talking about his son, who, without any question, had a bright future ahead of him, who died tragically under those conditions. Certainly this bill has to go forward. Again, I commend you for bringing it.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I want to speak in support of this bill and I thank the member from Willowdale for bringing it forward. I think for a lot of us, when it was first brought forward, it was actually a surprise that there wasn't some serious consequence for drinking in a motorized vessel on the waterways.

In my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, I have quite an extensive lakeshore. My riding includes communities like Grand Bend, which is quite famous for its summer activities and the waterways. We have Port Franks, and as we move along we have Kettle Point, Walpole Island, and Mitchell's Bay in Kent county as well. All these communities are famous as a summer resort area, and it's not uncommon to see people moving with coolers from their cars to their boating vessels.

There is a general perception that drinking and boating is an acceptable practice. More so, the likelihood of getting caught is small, and even if you were to get caught, the consequences are not terribly important and are almost negligible. So people do take the chance of drinking while they're boating.

There are a lot of myths around the idea of drinking and boating. There is the idea that there is no consequence, but also that drinking can be done safely in a boat. People are thinking that maybe all they have to do is have a drink and enjoy themselves and, if they get drunk, everything will be fine. What they don't understand is that it is a motorized vehicle and it can harm people.

There are myths around this sort of thing. They talk about things such as standing up; you know, can you stand up in a boat? Apparently 40% of the drownings that occur are related to boating. People fall out of their boats into the water and they are too drunk to be able to recover from that.

One thing certainly struck me, and another member mentioned it as well. I am a member of the standing committee on regulations and private bills. Mr. Ken Crompton came before the committee during its public hearings in September to talk about what happened to him and his family. There was no doubt; you could see the family was still hurting and suffering from the loss of

their son Peter. So he sent a letter to the members of Parliament. I want to read excerpts from that letter:

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"My son Pete was killed on July 13, 2003, while a passenger in a boat on Lake Joseph in the Muskokas. Pete was seated between two friends at the stern of the boat, which, at the time, was stationary. The operator of a second boat failed to observe the presence of the boat Pete was in and struck the left rear stern, coming to rest across the boat. Pete died of massive injuries caused by the boat's prop.

"The operator of the boat was charged with eight counts, including the impaired operation of a vehicle. He eventually pleaded guilty to criminal negligence causing Pete's death and was given a conditional sentence which consisted of 18 months of house arrest."

It goes on further to say, "In my discussions with representatives of the OPP, who are responsible for the majority of the policing of the waterways, they have indicated that the abuse of alcohol on the waterways is prevalent. Enforcement, however, is much more difficult than on the highways as in most instances there are no designated routes. The deterrent effect is, therefore, of paramount importance. The 12-hour suspension allows the enforcement officers to remove drivers' licences and thus prevent individuals who have been drinking to return to their vehicles and drive on the highways."

In his last paragraph he says, "Finally, in the case of Pete's death the operator of the boat did not have insurance. Although not confirmed, it is apparent that his inability to obtain insurance was a result of a lengthy record of offences under the Highway Traffic Act. Not surprisingly, there is a direct correlation between the manner in which the same individual chooses to operate a motor vehicle or a boat."

I think as legislators we have a responsibility to take care of our constituents when they go out on to the water. We need to make sure that it's safe. It's important in communities like Grand Bend, where tourists come, that they have the assurance that they can go on to the water and be safe out there; that anyone who is caught impaired out there will be punished accordingly. So I support this particular bill.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I guess that saying, "It gives me pleasure to speak to the bill"—I'm not sure how to take that, because after listening to Mr. Crompton in the committee, I too certainly realize, why are we debating a bill that it's just common sense should have been done years ago? Nevertheless, it's one of those things that falls through the cracks, and we're dealing with it today after reacting to tragedies that we realize maybe could have been prevented.

I come from a riding which is surrounded by water on three sides. I'm very fortunate to have the shores of Lake Ontario on the south, the shores of beautiful Rice Lake to the north, and probably one of the best navigable rivers, the Trent River system, to the east, which of course leads into numerous other parts of Ontario. So boating, I guess if I turn around on three sides, is very popular in the summer. Water is very accessible. So do we need boat

safety? For the people who live within the riding, for the visitors who come to the riding to explore those waters, we need to provide a sense of safety, a sense of security.

Just to show how important it is to create a sense of safety in our communities, the first week in May, I believe it is, at the mouth of the Trent River in the beautiful Bay of Quinte, there's a Kiwanis fishing derby. I don't exaggerate: There are thousands of boats.

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): A wonderful success.

Mr. Rinaldi: Wonderful success. If I stand on top of that bridge in the municipality of Quinte West and look into the bay, I almost get the sense that I could hop off the bridge and hop from boat to boat to boat. It goes on for a whole weekend. There are some fantastic prizes. People come from all over Ontario and probably from all over the northern part of the US.

So do we want to reassure these people that they're coming to an environment for recreation, for a sporting event, one for a weekend of enjoying themselves—of safety? I think we do.

When we talk about needing to pass this legislation, we need to recognize that when you're behind the wheel of a motorboat, it's no different from being behind the wheel of a car. Actually, it's probably more dangerous, because at least when you're behind the wheel of a car, you tend to follow the shoulder; you tend to follow the line in the middle of the road. Well, you're right on open waters. There is no right or left or in-between. So anything that we can do to enhance that safety, I think, we need to do.

I'm not a boater, I will admit, even though I live around bodies of water, but I did have the opportunity on a few occasions, with friends who are boaters, in the middle of the summer to go for a boat ride or be part of a regatta. I must admit that, yes, there was the bottle of beer in that boat, which we tend to enjoy. But I think the fact is that if we send the message out that maybe a bottle of beer is OK, but don't get behind the wheel of that particular craft, then with all reality, the number of incidents—and I know the member from Willowdale did a pile of research. When I was going through some of that research, some of the incidents that have happened have not been with people who had been drinking and driving a motorboat, but innocent bystanders who were there with their families, their friends, enjoying a beautiful day, a beautiful weekend, whatever the case may be. So it's the same old story: It's the innocent bystander who would normally suffer the consequences.

I want to thank the member for Willowdale for not giving up on this bill and for the research he did, because I think all of us in this place certainly have an interest in the best for Ontarians, and this is one of those things that I truly believe fell through the cracks, with the Ministry of Transportation not addressing the consequences that this might cause. So I'm hopeful that everybody supports the initiative that Mr. Zimmer, the member from Willowdale, brought forward. I know I certainly do. I'm here this morning. I don't normally sit on this committee, but I'm here because I'm committed to this.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): It's a pleasure today to rise and compliment the member from Willowdale for bringing forward this legislation and taking it to committee, and for the work he has done on it. The bill has been introduced several times before. I represent a riding, Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, with many lakes and many boating tragedies, unfortunately, every year. So anything that we can do to decrease the number of tragedies on our lakes and protect the people is something we should do.

Bill 209, if passed, will amend the Highway Traffic Act to give provincial law enforcement authorities the power to suspend the Ontario driver's licence of individuals who choose to drive a motorized vehicle on the water while impaired. Certainly, it's interesting. The member said that she didn't realize it wasn't like that already, and I agree. I did not know this either until this bill was brought forward.

I want to commend Mr. Crompton for enduring such a personal tragedy and having the courage to go forth to try and make changes in the system so other families don't endure what he had to endure. I had the pleasure of meeting him, not at the committee but at a function, and he told me about the tragedy with his son Pete and what he was trying to accomplish, and complimented the member from Willowdale for all the work he had done in working with him on that.

The amendments would result, on conviction of an alcohol-related offence while operating a vessel, in the convicted person's automobile driver's licence being suspended. It happens with snowmobiles. Again, it makes sense that it happens with boats. Enforcement authorities will have the ability to effect 12-hour suspensions, and the registrar, upon being notified by the police officer, shall suspend a person's driver's licence for 90 days. This is supported by the Ontario Provincial Police and by Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Mr. Crompton had been quoted in the newspapers as saying it is a deterrent. The incident occurred in by colleague's riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka and he wanted me to mention that, although we're running out of time for him to speak today, he's very supportive of this bill because of the proximity to him in the riding.

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We need, as a government, to make these changes. We need to be consistent in our messaging. We have laws in place that affect when you're drinking with heavy power equipment, with snowmobiles and with vehicles. So it makes total sense that this is extended to boat traffic, to driving boats. I think it's a good prevention measure. It is a deterrent. I know that the member for Durham wants to speak further on this bill as he is our party's transportation critic.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this. I'll be supporting this bill.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased at the outset to say as the transportation critic for the opposition that we're in support of any measure that makes our roads, waterways and highways safe. That's been the record of this government when we were government,

and certainly in opposition our leader, John Tory, would be of the same view.

We must all recognize that these pleasure crafts, as well as any privilege—it's a privilege to be given a licence. There are rules that much be abided by, and that's really what this bill attempts to do: join the two issues. The enforcement and deterrent that Ms. Scott referred to is part of bringing this forward to make our transportation areas safer. I would say that's pretty much all that has to be said about this bill. I think we'd be supportive of it and anyone who stands in this Legislature on private members' legislation would say that, because there's no other option. I think I'm also just repeating much of the work that's been done by MADD and others, and I compliment the member from Willowdale for taking his time and his ballot item to bring this forward.

As the critic, there are a lot of issues I'd like to put on the record. One of the things I'm getting calls on is the plate denial issue, which is the 407 tolls. There are two or three appeals before the courts on the 407, all to deal with either plate suspensions or other penalties that I don't think are going to be resolved. If the government doesn't look at this issue and the contract that exists—again, the operators of 407 highway as an example—they have no way of denying use of that transportation corridor. As such, this mechanism of resolving disputes—there's quite a long series of steps that have to be engaged before someone's plate is denied—that repeal mechanism, is—

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Durham, take a seat. I'm going to remind him it is private members' business and we are dealing with a bill that relates to boating, and not the subject you're on now. So I'd like you to come back to the bill, please.

Mr. O'Toole: Thank you for that very long interruption. I do appreciate the fact that—

The Deputy Speaker: OK, let's go.

Mr. O'Toole: What I was trying to do is tie in a relationship between resolving disputes. In this issue here, we have supported the government; it's a reasonable action to ensure that we have safety on our roadways, highways and waterways. That's really the linkage here. Reasonableness is really what I was trying to make the link with, respectfully, in resolving disputes. In this case, we're going to empower the police to effect a deterrent on the waterways of persons using, while drinking alcohol, any kind of motorized vehicle. Certainly, we support that.

The government—in this case, the member from Willowdale—is bringing this forward. I was just trying to relate this to other reasonable ways of resolving disputes without the court having to intervene and make some kind of jurisdiction. At the end of the day, it's all about the customer; in this case, the victim. That's really what you're trying to empower here. You have my assurance as the critic that I wasn't trying to be disrespectful to the Chair, but I was trying to find the link. You find this consensus in the House. Whether it's the insulin pump issue or this issue on the suspension of use of alcohol while operating a motor vehicle, you will find the ability

to bring forward what I consider to be fine, meaningful consensus in this Legislature. That's actually the most important message of the day for the visitors here today.

I respect the fact that the two issues before us are being voted on here very shortly. You'll find there is a great deal of harmony, consensus and respect for the arguments made for it. If I'm not digressing, I can say that I myself had a couple of bills. One was on the use of cellphones while driving. I had a private member's bill—it is a bill that will be introduced again—where I ask the Minister of Transportation, through private members' business, to consider modifying the Highway Traffic Act to regulate the use of cellphones and other distractive devices while operating a vehicle. This is very much a part of the argument, and this is the forum for that to happen. I am a little bit off topic, but I'm addressing two things.

As the critic for transportation, we are supportive of this, but there are other consensus-building initiatives, like the use of cellphones or other distractive devices while operating a motor vehicle, that should be brought forward here with a non-partisan—it is the right thing to do. You will find consensus. You will certainly find John Tory and our government supportive because we believe that fundamentally it's this simple: Good policy is good politics.

I think that in looking forward to voting on this bill and the other private member's legislation before us today, we have demonstrated to the public that, at the end of the day, we represent that we can work together and make Ontario a better place to live and keep us all safe and happy. Thank you very much for the time I've been given.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I wasn't planning on speaking to this bill today, but seeing that the member for Durham left me a minute, I'm pleased to get up to say that I think it's a very important bill. I'm glad to see the member for Willowdale bring it forward. Particularly representing an area like Parry Sound–Muskoka, I can tell you we've had some tragic circumstances where alcohol has been involved with boating incidents. I'm completely supportive of this bill. I think that it's an important bill and that you should have the same repercussions if you drink and boat that happen if you drink and drive. It's every bit as serious as drinking and driving an automobile. I'm pleased to see the member for Willowdale bring this bill forward. I know that in the area of Parry Sound–Muskoka there will be big support for this. I look forward to seeing it followed all the way through the process and become law.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Zimmer, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Mr. Zimmer: Let me say at the outset that nobody enjoys a cold beer or a cold gin and tonic on the lakeshore in summer more than I. But it's incumbent on all of us that if we're going to operate motorboats on the lakes, we do so responsibly. That means to do so without consuming alcohol.

What we're talking about here is operating a motorboat while you're impaired. That's the threshold. We've

already accepted in our society that you cannot operate a car or a truck while you're impaired. "Impaired" means over the legal limit, which is 0.08. We had that law in place for many years, and after due course we extended it to cover snowmobiles because the sentiment developed that people ought not to drive around on snowmobiles while they're impaired. Again, that's the threshold: impairment, over the legal limit, 0.08. What Bill 209 does is extend that same concept—don't drive a car or a truck while you're impaired; don't drive a snowmobile while you're impaired—to cover boats: Do not drive a motorboat while you're impaired. The threshold is impairment, over 0.08.

I want to thank all the members from my party and from the opposition parties for their support of this legislation. All parties have spoken objectively and passionately to this bill. All parties are in support of this bill. It will prevent harm; it will save lives.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you to all members. The time provided for private members' public business has now expired.

HEALTH INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT
(INSULIN PUMPS FOR DIABETICS), 2005
LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ
(POMPES À INSULINE
POUR DIABÉTIQUES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall deal first with ballot item number 11, standing in the name of Mr. Gravelle.

Mr. Gravelle has moved second reading of Bill 15, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members for a vote on this after we have dealt with the next item.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(DRINKING AND BOATING
OFFENCES), 2005
LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(INFRACTIONS RELATIVES À L'ALCOOL
ET À LA NAVIGATION DE PLAISANCE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 12, standing in the name of Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. Zimmer has moved second reading of Bill 209, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to the suspension of drivers' licences.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."
 All those opposed, say "nay."
 In my opinion, the ayes have it.
 We will have a vote on this. Call in the members. I
 remind you that this is a five-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

HEALTH INSURANCE
 AMENDMENT ACT
 (INSULIN PUMPS FOR DIABETICS), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI
 SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ
 (POMPES À INSULINE
 POUR DIABÉTIQUES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr.
 Gravelle has moved second reading of Bill 15.
 All those in favour, please stand.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hoy, Pat	Parsons, Ernie
Arthurs, Wayne	Jackson, Cameron	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Racco, Mario G.
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramal, Khalil
Craiton, Kim	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Delaney, Bob	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Di Cocco, Caroline	McMeekin, Ted	Scott, Laurie
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Smitherman, George
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Van Bommel, Maria
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol	Yakabuski, John
Gravelle, Michael	O'Toole, John	Zimmer, David
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please
 stand.

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L.
 DesRosiers):** The ayes are 41; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
 Pursuant to standing—

**Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior
 North):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the bill be referred
 to the standing committee on social policy.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

The doors will be open for 30 seconds before we take
 the next vote.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
 (DRINKING AND BOATING
 OFFENCES), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT
 LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
 (INFRACTIONS RELATIVES À L'ALCOOL
 ET À LA NAVIGATION DE PLAISANCE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr.
 Zimmer has moved second reading of Bill 209.
 All those in favour, please stand.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Arthurs, Wayne	Hoy, Pat	Parsons, Ernie
Bisson, Gilles	Jackson, Cameron	Prue, Michael
Brownell, Jim	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Racco, Mario G.
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramal, Khalil
Craiton, Kim	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Delaney, Bob	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Di Cocco, Caroline	McMeekin, Ted	Scott, Laurie
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Smitherman, George
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Van Bommel, Maria
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol	Yakabuski, John
Gravelle, Michael	O'Toole, John	Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please
 stand.

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L.
 DesRosiers):** The ayes are 42; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, the bill is referred to—

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): Mr. Speaker, I'd
 like this bill to be referred to the standing committee on
 general government.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' public
 business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair.
 The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1211 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILDREN'S GARDEN
 NURSERY SCHOOL

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):
 I rise to congratulate the Children's Garden Nursery
 School of the city of Pembroke, in my riding of
 Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, as the recipient of the
 prestigious Donner Canadian Foundation Award for ex-
 cellence in child care at their awards ceremony last week
 here Toronto. Out of 842 applicants narrowed down to 31
 finalist in nine categories, our very own Children's Gar-
 den Nursery School came out on top. This award comes
 with a \$5,000 prize.

This was not an easy year for the nursery school, as
 they were forced to relocate as a result of a serious flood
 in Pembroke this past spring. Instead of shutting down,
 the school operated out of a nearby church until repairs
 could be completed. The support of parents, neighbours
 and the community was vital at that time.

I had the pleasure of visiting the Children's Garden
 Nursery School personally last year. They were devoting
 one week of their activities to each letter of the alphabet,
 and I was honoured to be their special guest during "Y"
 week. What I saw were happy, cheerful children fully
 engaged in the broad scope of activities at this wonderful
 facility. There is no better way to evaluate the perform-
 ance of a nursery school than to see the faces of the

children themselves. The young faces at the Children's Garden Nursery School score their school an A++.

I know that everyone here in this House joins me in congratulating me executive director Benita Richardson and all the staff at Children's Garden Nursery School, and in thanking them for the excellent job they do for our children.

SANTA'S PARADE OF LIGHTS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): This weekend, I was part of Santa's Parade of Lights in my riding of Ottawa–Orléans. The parade was produced and hosted by the Ottawa Professional Fire Fighters Association. The parade route was three kilometres long, starting at Youville Drive and finishing at our former city hall near the Orléans shopping plaza.

There were 77 floats involved in the parade, the most impressive floats to date. It is estimated that over 100,000 people attended the parade; this turnout was also our biggest. There was a toy drive to celebrate the Christmas season, and collect toys and money for those in need. The parade watchers were encouraged to bring a loonie or a toonie to support the toy drive campaign. A total of 150 firefighters volunteered for the parade, with 100 of them walking the parade route collecting cash donations as well as new toys for the Salvation Army.

I would like to thank Wyatt McWilliams for letting me drive his team of horses and for the wonderful float he provided, and all the people who participated in our float: Cedric Pelletier, Sara and Mackie Leduc, Katie and Scott Smith, Daniel Kemp, Mary deToro, Sarah Benfield and Dawn Stroz. They were wonderful elves. I also thank Don McNeely for assisting me in driving the horses.

The parade was a huge success, grossing more than \$20,000 for the Salvation Army. I thank the co-chairs, Rob Rainboth and Ken Walton, as well as all the firefighters and volunteers who donated their time and effort in making the 2005 parade of lights in my home of Orléans a tremendous success.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to speak with some optimism about a challenging event in my riding of Durham which includes, of course, the situation around General Motors and the optimism at UOIT, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology.

The optimism began when John Tory, our leader, kicked off the Durham region United Way campaign yesterday. John, who continues his commitment to the United Way following his years of volunteerism and worthwhile charitable fundraising, recognized the two United Way leaders for the McLaughlin Award for volunteerism: Bill Nurse and Stan Lovel. Mr. Tory's message of volunteerism and community commitment was well received by many community leaders and volunteers.

Afterwards, John Tory took the time to meet with Dave Paterson, who is the corporate vice-president, environmental, for General Motors of Canada, and mayor John Gray of Oshawa, as well as Bob Malcolmson, the executive director of the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce. Naturally, we spoke of the challenges facing our economy generally, and General Motors specifically, on how all leaders at every level must work together, much like the United Way. We also spoke, of course, of GM and the desire to have the Beacon project signed by the Dalton McGuinty government. We also spoke of the energy strategy of this government and how it's affecting manufacturing. We also spoke of the backlog at the Windsor border.

It's not only important to our economy, but it's important in this way to the university of Ontario. We spoke of the auto strategy, a strategy for the auto sector which was started by Jim Flaherty, the former finance minister and Minister of Economic Development, in 2002. John Tory was there to listen and John Tory was there to understand.

MILL CLOSURE

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): The community of Cornwall, as we know, this week was dealt a devastating piece of news with the announcement of the permanent closure of the Domtar paper facility. We are saddened by the announcement. We think this is something that, quite frankly, can be avoided and should have been avoided. In the words of Jamie Lim from the Ontario Forestry Association, "When it comes to the crisis that we have in forestry, it is not a made-outside-of-Ontario problem; it is a problem caused inside the province."

The industry is quite clear. They're saying, "We're able to deal with the external pressures. What we need is to have a provincial government that will deal with those issues that are important in being able to keep costs down." Namely, energy prices are a killer, especially for those in the pulp and paper business, as well as fibre costs, something which the provincial government has all the control over.

I say to the government and I say to the minister across the way that they need to get their act together, they need to recognize that they are part of the problem, that if the government doesn't get its act together when it comes to both energy policy and forestry policy, the closure that we saw in Cornwall, unfortunately, will not be the last one. It is a sad thing, because the pulp and paper industry and forestry sector is the second-largest contributing industry to the province of Ontario. For this government to take a cavalier approach in saying, "Let market forces dictate what happens in the industry," I think is a very bad decision on the part of the government, and one that will cost thousands of jobs across this province. These are important jobs, they're well-paying jobs and the government should stand up for those workers who are affected, along with their communities.

THE CHARLATAN

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I rise today in praise of a spirited newspaper that is an advocate for freedom of expression. I refer to the student newspaper for Carleton University. It's called *The Charlatan*, and it just turned 60 years of age this past Monday.

Contrary to its name, *The Charlatan* speaks the direct, untarnished truth because it is independent, both financially and editorially. Thus, this leader in its field neither has to be nor does it want to be politically correct. As its recent editorial expressed, "Newspapers should write about the issues—not celebrity; about what matters—not what is the flavour of the month."

The Charlatan's history is noted in the feature stories it shares with its avid readers. As a former editor-in-chief has said, "Words have consequences." Thus the high quality of journalism of *The Charlatan*, which has been quoted in Parliament, noted in our national dailies and has been voted the "best damned little independent university newspaper," within our elite journalistic circles.

During their 60th season, I, along with many others who are well-informed *Charlatan* readers, toast with pride this one-of-a-kind little newspaper which maintains Canada's original spirit of journalism, strong and free. Congratulations to all of those who organize to produce this fine paper.

PROPOSED OXFORD HOSPITAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): It gives me great pleasure to welcome all the good folks who have travelled from my great riding of Oxford and are sitting in the gallery today. These people, close to 80 of them, arrived here on two buses. In fact, following these two buses are two cows. These Holsteins are here to help them deliver the message, "Let's get moooving."

They took time out of their busy schedules to personally deliver 2,000 postcards received from the residents of their community asking the McGuinty government to give approval to go to tender for the new hospital. Community leaders, hospital officials and volunteers have worked hard to meet their end of the deal. This 25-acre site is ready for construction. The property has been pregraded, services have been installed, roads and sidewalks have been built. This community is ready and waiting.

Along with the bake sales, lotteries and many fundraising events held in the community, there were some very exciting and creative events held to help the foundation meet its financial obligations: fundraising events such as the Woodstock and District Homebuilders, who through our helping hands project built a house in 72 hours with all proceeds, \$285,000, donated to the hospital campaign; and Jim Palmer, a local farmer, sold a herd of cows and donated it to the hospital.

The people of Oxford do not understand how the hospital could be so close and then be stalled like this. I

ask the Minister of Health to recognize the dedication and hard work of the hospital committee, the health needs of the people and to make the good news announcement today that the folks of Oxford are waiting for: Say that you are signing off on the approvals required so we can keep moving forward.

1340

HABITAT JAM

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I rise today to inform the House of the UN Habitat Jam, which is taking place between December 1, today, and December 3. This exciting program is a unique global on-line exchange on the theme of sustainable urban development.

As part of this 72-hour event, tens of thousands of people around the world will connect in real time over the Internet to discuss solutions to key issues such as urban stability. Issues that this international event will attempt to tackle include improving the lives of slum dwellers, sustainable access to water, environmental sustainability, safety and security, finance and governance, and humanity—the future of our cities.

In addition to these timely and important topics, the Habitat Jam will feature on-line plenary sessions to be moderated by renowned Canadians such as Justin Trudeau, David McGuinty, Michael Harcourt, Gil Parent, Michael Weil and others. Sessions will also be moderated by leading international figures such as Sheela Patel of India, Dr. Pietro Garau of Italy, Raquel Rolnik of Brazil and Jesse M. Robredo of the Philippines.

The Habitat Jam is a great way for citizens in Canada and around the world to get involved in issues that matter to them. All they need to participate in this historic forum is a small commitment of time and the Internet.

I urge everyone to check out the Habitat Jam this weekend.

KNOLLCREST LODGE

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth—Middlesex): For the last 33 years, Knollcrest Lodge in Milverton has earned a reputation for providing compassionate care to the elderly and those with disabilities. Knollcrest is the heart of Milverton and Perth East.

To ensure Knollcrest continues to provide the best possible caring environment for its residents, it began its Renewal of Knollcrest campaign in 2003 to raise funds for its redevelopment. The community response was spectacular and in just two years the community has reached its goal, yet to move forward with their redevelopment, Knollcrest required funding from the provincial government to bring their project to fruition.

On November 18, 2005, I was pleased to announce on behalf of the McGuinty government and the Honourable George Smitherman that our government has approved

exceptional circumstances funding for Knollcrest Lodge. This funding will allow Knollcrest to move forward with its \$7.3-million redevelopment project. When announced, Perth East Mayor Bob McTavish said that he is "very pleased that the provincial government has provided funding for this project to go ahead."

I commend our government for their vision and commitment to rural health care in this province. The new and redeveloped home at Knollcrest will provide residents with higher quality of life and better equipped long-term-care beds to address the needs of its residents.

At this time, I'd like to thank the local community for successfully completing their fundraising campaign. Without the community's generous support, this project would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Susan Rae, administrator of Knollcrest, her staff and the Renewal of Knollcrest campaign committee, particularly chair Dave Shearer, for their tireless efforts in making this project a reality.

SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF AND LEARNING-DISABLED

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): I am very proud of what our government has done for education in Ontario. I believe we have publicly funded school systems that are second to none.

I'd like to take a moment and talk about five very special schools in this province that I believe don't get the recognition they deserve. We have Jules-Léger, E.C. Drury, Roberts School for the Deaf and Sir James Whitney, all of which serve deaf students, and W. Ross Macdonald in Brantford that serves the deaf-blind. These are schools that, first of all, are staffed by exemplary staff, people who have a career but have made an absolute commitment to the students in their schools. They're very special people and I believe they need that recognition.

I'm blessed to have Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf in my riding. The students face the challenges that every other student in this province has, along with the additional challenge of being deaf, an obstacle that would stop many people. But I have not yet met a student at Sir James Whitney whom I felt had been overcome. In fact, they don't regard it as a handicap; they simply regard it as one more issue for them to work with and resolve. I'm very proud of that school.

But here's the rub, thinking primarily of the deaf because of the location in my community: traditionally in Ontario the unemployment rate for graduates is 85%. Eighty-five per cent of our graduates are unemployed: tremendous individuals—highly motivated, highly skilled, highly trained—who want a job in this province. So I issue a challenge to industries, business and government in this province to employ this highly skilled workforce. They are a credit to us and to their organization.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SECURITIES TRANSFER ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE TRANSFERT DES VALEURS MOBILIÈRES

Mr. Phillips moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to create a comprehensive system of rules for the transfer of securities that is consistent with such rules across North America and to make consequential amendments to various Acts / *Projet de loi 41, Loi instituant un régime global de règles régissant le transfert des valeurs mobilières qui cadre avec celui qui s'applique dans ce domaine en Amérique du Nord et apportant des modifications corrélatives à diverses lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the minister wish to make a statement?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I'll have a statement under ministerial statements.

EASTERN ONTARIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE FONDS DE DÉVELOPPEMENT ÉCONOMIQUE DE L'EST DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to establish the Eastern Ontario Economic Development Fund Corporation / *Projet de loi 42, Loi créant la Société de gestion du Fonds de développement économique de l'Est de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may have a brief statement.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): Today, I reintroduce the eastern Ontario development fund corporation act. When I introduced this bill, we debated it and passed second reading with unanimous support in April. However, like many other good private members' bills, it died on the order paper when the House prorogued.

The bill is modelled after the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Act, the successes of which the Minister of Northern Development and Mines was trumpeting in the House yesterday. Many of the small towns and smaller cities in eastern Ontario are facing a bleak time at this time, and if we are not able to somehow make investment in the region more attractive, they will continue to suffer. This bill, if passed, would do just that.

I want to thank members of the House for their support of this bill in the past, and I encourage them to support it again.

**SIDOFF'S CLEANERS & TAILORS
LIMITED ACT, 2005**

Mr. Craitor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr23, An Act to revive Sidoff's Cleaners & Tailors Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

1350

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I hope that it might be an appropriate time to seek unanimous consent to allow members to wear the red ribbon in acknowledgment of today being World AIDS Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd seek unanimous consent to wear this yellow scarf in support of the Woodstock hospital.

The Speaker: Agreed? No.

MOTIONS**HOUSE SITTINGS**

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the House calendar.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Caplan has asked for unanimous consent to move a motion regarding the House calendar. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a), the House shall continue to meet commencing Monday, December 12, 2005, until Thursday, December 15, 2005; and

That when the House adjourns on Thursday, December 15, 2005, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, February 13, 2006, and continue to meet until Thursday, March 2, 2006; and

That when the House adjourns on Thursday, March 2, 2006, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, March 27, 2006, which date commences the spring sitting period; and

That, notwithstanding standing order 42(1)(ii), there may be one opposition day designated during the extended fall sitting period commencing Monday, February 13, 2006.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES****SECURITIES LEGISLATION**

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I rise today to introduce the Securities Transfer Act, 2005, which, if passed by this House, would update laws and set out the rules for transferring and holding securities in Ontario.

In the spring budget, the Minister of Finance announced a number of measures that this government would be taking to help improve the Ontario economy. The proposed Securities Transfer Act would support our efforts to ensure that Ontario remains the economic engine of Canada.

This bill is the first of three phases of corporate law reform that the government will be bringing forward in the House to improve the business environment in Ontario. Now more than ever, we have to make sure that Ontario remains competitive with other jurisdictions around the world. This bill would give clarity to investors and help make sure that Ontario's capital markets remain an investment destination of choice.

If passed, the bill would achieve this by creating the necessary legal framework to recognize today's electronic trading in securities and to ensure that security transactions are valid; increasing the stability and competitiveness of our financial markets; reducing transaction costs and the risk of litigation; facilitating cross-border transactions; and encouraging more direct foreign investment.

This bill would also make complementary amendments to the Ontario Business Corporations Act, the Personal Property Security Act, the Execution Act, the Securities Act, and the Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act.

The bill was developed in response to recommendations made last year by the standing committee on finance and economic affairs to bring forward securities transfer legislation that reflects current business realities. I know that laws regulating the transfer and holding of securities don't necessarily seem relevant to the everyday lives of many Ontarians. However, it is a vitally important area of our economy that, to this point, has simply not kept pace with the incredible growth and change in securities markets over the past 30 years. If we don't update these laws, we risk falling behind, and that's not an acceptable option. This is an important bill that will help ensure Ontario's capital markets contend in an increasingly competitive global market.

This bill is the result of many hours, dare I say years, of work, and I would like to take this moment to acknowledge some individuals who have provided invaluable input: Eric Spink and Max Paré, who drafted the original Uniform Securities Transfer Act and have been active contributors to the development of our own Securities Transfer Act. I think both of them have

worked on this for more than 10 years; Wayne Gray, Robert Scavone, David Butler and the other members of the Ontario Bar Association corporate law subcommittee have provided astute advice and participated actively in our stakeholder consultations; Jennifer Babe, John Cameron and other members of the Uniform Law Conference of Canada; and Purdy Crawford and the members of the Securities Act Five-Year Review Committee. Many of them are with us in the gallery, and I wonder if they might stand so we could acknowledge their work on behalf of the people of Ontario.

I would also very much like to thank the members of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs for considering proposals on the Uniform Securities Transfer Act, which in turn formed the backbone of this bill. The unanimous recommendation from that committee to implement the substance of this proposal is a good example of all parties in this Legislature working together to further Ontario's economic advantage. I would urge all members to support this important legislation.

ACCESSIBLE PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I rise in the House today to talk about a program that helps hundreds of thousands of people in Ontario who live with a disability. I am announcing important changes to the disabled person parking permit program. As of January 16, 2006, it will be known as the accessible parking permit program.

This morning I was at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, along with my colleague Minister Pupa-tello. It could not have been a more appropriate setting to make today's announcement, because it is a simple fact that accessibility affects everyone.

Our government is committed to making Ontario accessible for those living with a disability, and we are proud of that fact. We issue an average of 130,000 permits every year.

This past year, my ministry received nearly 30,000 calls about this program. Most of them are about how long the process takes. The changes I am announcing today cut the processing and production time for these permits in half.

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We have also allowed applicants to have their eligibility certified by a nurse practitioner, extended class. The expanded list with added health professionals means more access to service on a timely basis. The Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario joined me this morning to express their gratification about this important addition.

We're also doing what we can to make sure that disabled parking spots are available for people who really need them. In the GTA last year alone, more than 1,500 permits were seized for misuse.

The new permits are more secure and tamper-resistant. They use embedded watermarks, ultraviolet ink and

microprint technology. They spell out whether the permit was issued to a driver or a passenger. There is an identification code so that enforcement officers can easily see whether the permit is valid and belongs to the person who is using it.

These security enhancements will help police and municipalities enforce the permits. I was joined this morning by Staff Superintendent Grant, who spoke about how important this change was.

Our new colour-coded permit system will also help with security. Permanent disability permits are blue, temporary permits are red, company permits are green, and our new traveller permits are purple.

I'm especially proud to introduce the traveller permits. Until now, people living with a disability who travel had to leave their permits behind in order to park close to their departure point at Ontario airports. That means they could not access an accessible parking permit on the other end of the journey when travelling. Now they will be able to leave a traveller permit on the windshield of a car parked at the airport and take their regular permit with them when they are travelling. Traveller permits are valid at Ontario airports only. However, once they are in use, Transport Canada has expressed interest in using our system as a model for the rest of the country.

The improvements I am announcing today come after extensive talks with stakeholders representing people with disabilities, and the medical and enforcement communities.

This Saturday is International Day of Disabled Persons. Nearly one and a half million people in Ontario—that's more than 13% of the population—live with a disability.

Earlier this year, our government passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It marks a new era of accessibility in Ontario. The changes to the accessible parking permit program move us closer to our government's goal of an accessible province for those living with disability by the year 2025.

A safe and efficient transportation system is key to our prosperity and our quality of life. I urge all members to support our efforts to ensure a modern and reliable transportation system accessible to all Ontarians.

WORLD AIDS DAY

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I rise today to acknowledge a date that casts a long and dark shadow, for today is World AIDS Day.

It has been 23 years since the first case of AIDS was reported here in Ontario. As we look back over these 23 years, we cannot help but be filled with powerful and conflicting emotions. We feel pride as we think of the dignity and courage with which so many people have confronted HIV/AIDS. We struggle with grief as we remember friends, loved ones, colleagues, neighbours who lost their struggle against this silent and relentless enemy. And the grief is particularly pronounced for me

as I walk past the AIDS memorial just around the corner at Church and Wellesley.

We feel hope as we bear witness to medical advances, new forms of treatment and pharmaceutical breakthroughs, and as we see the success of education and awareness campaigns. But most of all, today is a day that fills us with determination to not just continue with the work being done but to do more, more to help those who suffer from HIV/AIDS to live longer, healthier lives, and more to slow and ultimately to stop its further spread.

This morning I had the privilege of attending the opening of the headquarters of the 16th International AIDS Conference. The conference is being held here in Toronto next August, and the theme is Time to Deliver. All of us, and I include myself in a very personal capacity, subscribe to that position. It is time to deliver.

I mentioned a moment ago that we can find hope in the advances and breakthroughs being made. Yes, there is progress to report on, and as we look at the landscape here in Ontario and Canada, we have made progress, but the hard truth is that we have not yet done enough. Despite decreases in the rate of infection in certain countries, the reality is that the overall number of people living with HIV continues to increase in almost every region of the world. Despite all that we know, all that we've learned, there were five million new worldwide infections in the past year. Despite our efforts at education and prevention, more than 6,000 young people between 15 and 24 become infected with HIV every day. Despite success in some parts of the globe, HIV infections are up 25% in other parts, including eastern Europe and central Asia.

Closer to home, the numbers are also troubling. After years of decline in the early 1990s, HIV infection rates in Ontario and Canada have been rising again in recent years. In Ontario, the HIV infection rate in 2004 was almost 40% higher than in 2000, and the death toll continues to climb. Worldwide, it is estimated that more than three million people will have died of AIDS this year alone, and more than half a million of these will have been children.

But even against these daunting and frightening numbers, we are determined to fight back. Here in our province, I'm pleased to observe that the government of Ontario is extremely active in the battle against HIV/AIDS. That has been the long-standing case in our province. I note that it is in no way a partisan issue. All parties, I believe, share our strong commitment to this cause. In fact, I know they do.

This year, Ontario is spending \$54 million on AIDS-related programs, not including those expenses related to physician OHIP billings for HIV and AIDS drugs. But as the statistics I cited earlier tell us, this is clearly a global issue, and regardless of what we do within our own borders, the answers must be global answers, because HIV/AIDS respects no borders.

One of the most meaningful ways in which the international community is addressing the global implications of HIV/AIDS is through the International AIDS Con-

ference. I had the privilege and opportunity last year to attend the conference in Bangkok, and it was truly an inspirational event—inspirational, informative, productive. As many will already be aware, Toronto is serving as the host city of next year's International AIDS Conference, the 16th such gathering. As in previous years, it will be a landmark occasion, bringing together medical science, human compassion and social tolerance on a global scale.

As I mentioned a moment ago, I had the opportunity this morning to attend the opening of the offices that will serve as headquarters for next year's conference. They have some work to do, because this conference is an event that will bring between 15,000 and 20,000 scientists, physicians, health care workers, community leaders and national leaders working on HIV/AIDS to our city, and it will attract upwards of 3,000 journalists. I had the privilege this morning of announcing that the province of Ontario is contributing \$1.5 million toward the hosting of the 2006 International AIDS Conference. This certainly isn't the solution to the problem, but it's a big step toward a solution.

I'm delighted to acknowledge the presence of people in the gallery today, some of whom I will mention and many more who are here, many of whom I have known for a long time and who are celebrated leaders from a variety of communities. Here are some of the people who are playing particularly pronounced roles: someone I deeply admire, Dr. Mark Wainberg, who is the conference co-chair; Dr. Evan Collins, the local co-chair, along with Dr. Liviana Calzavara; Mr. Ron Rosenes, secretary to the board of the AIDS conference, the local council; Ms. Gail Flintoft—it says she's here, and I know she's not; she's away on business related to this conference—Ms. Joan Anderson; and the director of the Toronto host secretariat, Darryl Perry, as well as board members, staff and volunteers. Their commitment to this cause is admirable. I know that all members will join with me in saluting them and thanking them for their work.

Dr. Peter Piot, executive director of UNAIDS, was recently quoted as saying, "The AIDS epidemic continues to outstrip global and national efforts to contain it."

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While Dr. Piot's analysis is enormously troubling, I would hope that on World AIDS Day we do more than be discouraged by it. On this World AIDS Day, let us accept the challenge—the challenge that he and so many others, including Stephen Lewis, have issued—and let us rise to it. Let us do more to address this crisis, and "crisis" is not too strong a word. More than 25 million people have died of AIDS since 1981 and, worldwide, the number of people living with HIV today stands at its highest level ever, at over 40 million. Five human beings lose their lives to AIDS each and every minute, and since 1981, we've lost more than 7,000 Ontarians to AIDS.

There are people in our province, especially young people, who continue to hold the belief that there exists a cure for AIDS or that it's a thing of the past or that they

are somehow invincible or immune. This cannot continue. On this World AIDS Day, I invite all members to join with us in pledging to do more to help those living with HIV and AIDS, both here and around the world, and to do all that we possibly can to stop the march of this devastating disease.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

SECURITIES LEGISLATION

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):

The need to update securities transfer legislation in Canada is clear and compelling. It was the PC government that initiated the Purdy Crawford review which resulted in the legislation before the House today. What is missing now from the bill is the removal of the regulator from enforcement.

Investment transfers between institutions has long been a problem. The Investment Dealers Association has taken steps to improve transfers between member institutions by attempting to facilitate transfers within 21 days. An area of concern with respect to the timeliness of transfers is between investment dealers, who are typically members of the Mutual Fund Dealers Association. Asset transfers between these groups tend to take too much time.

Part of the problem that exists tends to be due to the provider of the financial services not being the holder of the securities—what is known as “off-book assets.” Because the transfer process is paper-based, these transfers tend to take significantly longer. Any legislation that improves the speed with which a transaction can occur is considered beneficial to the consumer.

However, while legislation may be in place, the financial ability of independent distributors to implement any legislation may be limited, as financial systems may have to be upgraded and costs for some may be prohibitive. Regardless, an improvement in transferring assets is long overdue.

I look forward to further reviewing the bill, which is in excess of 160 pages, and public hearings.

ACCESSIBLE PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): John Tory and the opposition want to be on the record as supporting this improvement in access to disability parking, especially on this International Day of Disabled Persons. I'm encouraged to read that much of the work was based on consultation with community groups as well as medical and enforcement communities.

However, citizens have the right to expect more than promises, photo ops and announcements from this government. I urge members to remain optimistic but also to reserve the right to judge this program by its results rather than another promise. I'd like to remind the House that it was the McGuinty government that promised no

new taxes, yet they increased taxes and other expenses by \$2,000 per person per year in Ontario.

Doctors and other medical practitioners will be required to certify the eligible permits. This raises the issue of access to doctors. We all know that there's a doctor shortage in this province under the McGuinty government. Also, this government has actually taken away previous OHIP coverage from physiotherapy and other health care services.

I do urge members to remain optimistic, and I urge members to watch carefully and listen to the advice of our constituents to ensure that this program announced today indeed makes it easier for persons with disabilities to access parking within their communities.

WORLD AIDS DAY

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): As I was driving into the city this morning from home listening to CBC Radio, I heard a startling statistic. In Canada, the broadcaster reported, 11 people become infected with HIV every single day.

As the Legislature speaks as one this afternoon, acknowledging this vitally important public health care challenge, we reaffirm our commitment to doing all that we can to work toward the worldwide eradication of HIV/AIDS. I believe it is necessary to point out once again that this terrible disease does not discriminate among its victims. They include women and children as well as men. There are no stereotypical HIV/AIDS victims, and their numbers include many carriers who are unaware of their condition.

While we as a society may think we have this problem under control, clearly we do not. This is true not only in Africa, where AIDS is decimating the population because of an inadequate worldwide response, as Stephen Lewis so eloquently reminded us in Palmerston a few weeks ago, but it is also an enormous continuing public health challenge in all developed countries as well, including our own.

So, on this World AIDS Day 2005, we do recognize the outstanding work that's being done in Ontario to promote understanding and awareness, to treat patients and improve the quality of their lives, and to pursue the development of better medication through research. We have made progress, and as such, it is appropriate that the 16th International AIDS Conference will take place in Toronto next year. It is certainly the hope of our party that the conference will be a success and will lead to better coordination of worldwide efforts to combat this terrible affliction, giving us reason to hope for a day when we will only read the term “HIV/AIDS” in a history text.

SECURITIES LEGISLATION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): In response to the Minister of Government Services, and as a member of the all-party committee that unanimously

made the recommendations, we welcome the fact that this has come forward.

We ask you, though, to redouble your effort for a single regulator, which seems to have stalled, and because it has stalled, we think that what has also been stalled is the single greatest recommendation we made, and that was recommendation 5.

Just to refresh everyone, recommendation 5 said that the adjudicative function of the Ontario Securities Commission should be separated from its other functions, based on the recommendations of the fairness committee. As members of that committee, we had many debates. What you are implementing today was agreed upon—and agreed upon fairly rapidly. But the greatest single recommendation we made, and the one we look forward to your passing, is recommendation 5. Until that happens, we do not believe the Ontario Securities Commission can exist in a way that is seen to be fair and acts fairly to all those people whose monies may be at risk.

ACCESSIBLE PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): To the Minister of Transportation in regard to his announcement about accessible parking permits I only say, “Good luck.” How many times have we heard this government and previous governments say they were going to cut the waiting time in half, cut the processing time in half when it comes to all kinds of services?

Do we remember the reforms to the FRO? Do we remember those, as members? They never happened. Do we remember what has been announced just recently when it comes to birth certificates, where the government says they’re going to reduce the processing time? I can tell you that we still have the lineups in our constituency offices. Things are taking just as long.

Number one, my question to the minister would be, what are you prepared to do when it comes to staff resources that are necessary in order to make this achievable? Number two, what you’re really talking about doing in here is rationing the number of parking permits by not allowing certain people to get parking permits who would normally have gotten them. What you say here is, “We’re also doing what we can to make sure that disabled parking spots are available for people who really need them.” If I’ve ever seen a buzzword, that’s one of them.

WORLD AIDS DAY

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On World AIDS Day, we acknowledge the grim reality that there are 56,000 Canadians living with HIV/AIDS, and 30% of those who are affected are unaware of their infection. The prevalence of AIDS is growing, especially among women, youth, aboriginal people and injection drug users. This must concern us all. This is a country, and indeed a world, where no society and no group within

society can remain immune to HIV/AIDS. We need to respond effectively and aggressively, and we need to do that every day.

On this day, I want to focus on five things that need to be done.

First, at their meeting on October 22, 2005, the federal-provincial-territorial ministers of social services agreed to work toward the full inclusion of persons with disabilities by addressing income support and improving access to and funding for disability supports and services. We need income supports in place that allow people with disabilities to live in dignity. The Ontario AIDS Network sees this as a priority and has said they are going to monitor these discussions. They have also requested a meeting with Ontario’s Minister of Community and Social Services to discuss their particular concerns with respect to this issue from the perspective of people living with HIV/AIDS.

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Secondly, we need to increase ODSP benefits. The Ontario AIDS Network passed a policy at their September 11, 2005, board meeting urging the Ontario government to increase the Ontario disability support benefit. The reality in the province today is that those who are living on ODSP are further behind in terms of their income than they were under the Harris Conservatives. This government must increase ODSP benefits so the disabled in our community can live with a decent income.

Thirdly, we really need to address the gaps in services for HIV/AIDS patients, especially in northern Ontario, or fix the northern health travel grant so it can respond to those many patients who have to travel from northeastern Ontario into Sudbury to the HIV clinic. They have to travel more than other patients because they have to be followed up for blood work etc, and it’s a very high cost for them to continue to do that. The northern health travel grant is not flexible enough to respond to that need, and we either need to have services in people’s own communities or fix the northern health travel grant so that folks aren’t continuing to be under such high costs.

Two other initiatives: We need to really augment harm reduction initiatives. Too many people in small communities have difficulty accessing these services, and many public health agencies do not provide them. We need to strengthen the HIV/AIDS strategy so that wherever you live, you will have equitable access to services. Finally, we need to recognize the link between HIV/AIDS and hep C. In Sudbury, 75% of the clients with HIV/AIDS also have hep C. If we put in the supports to help those folks, we will be helping HIV/AIDS patients.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for a member of each party to speak

for up to five minutes to recognize international day for the disabled.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I rise in the House today to recognize the United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons on December 3, which is this Saturday.

It has been my honour to serve as minister responsible for disability issues for the last six months. I've long been an advocate for people with disabilities and hope that all of us in this House will continue in that effort. But as minister responsible, I have a clear understanding of the many issues, barriers and discriminations that people with disabilities face every day, and I'm more determined than ever to do something about this.

Our government, indeed every member of this House, made a deep commitment to improve accessibility for everyone with a disability in Ontario when we passed the historic Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act last year, thanks in large part to the minister at that time, Marie Bountrogianni. Congratulations to Marie for that. That legislation was long overdue. We needed legislation with teeth, and now we've got it—and it has lots of teeth.

I want to thank my honourable colleagues on both sides of the House for their commitment to unite to pass a law that will make an enormous difference in the lives of millions of Ontarians every day.

The International Day of Disabled Persons each year calls on each of us to promote an understanding of disability issues and to mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of people with disabilities. This day serves to remind all of us that throughout the world, people with disabilities deserve the opportunity to participate in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

We cannot change the world, but we can change Ontario. If you look around your community today, you'll be amazed at how much has already changed, things that we are now even taking for granted, since we first began thinking about how hard it was for people with a physical disability to manoeuvre through their daily lives. Today you'll see sliding doors that open with the push of a button, whereas you would have once only seen doors that you had to pull, and heavy doors at that; you'll find movie theatres with ramps as aisles instead of stairs; we're beginning to see more intersections that have audio lights, chirping or beeping signals in addition to the lights.

Even with these advances, we've still got so much more work to do. We need to continually improve our work environments, our business operations, our buildings, our transportation systems.

Today, we had a wonderful announcement with the Minister of Transportation in making more accessible those permits that are so vital to people who have to get in and out of our community daily.

Applause.

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Yes, special congratulations to Minister Takhar—in a parking garage, of all places. It was wonderful.

But most important, we need to improve our attitude toward people with disabilities. You can't have equal opportunity in employment if you can't get to work because of an inaccessible transportation system, for example, if you can't get into the building, if you don't have access to education and training, or if important technologies are inaccessible to you.

Our accessibility legislation has to change this. With the AODA as our road map to accessibility, we are reaching out. We're reaching out to the business community that stands to benefit from a multi-billion dollar market. We're reaching out to municipal governments to work with us to improve accessibility everywhere. We're reaching out to people with disabilities and involving them in every step of the way. We're reaching out to ordinary Ontarians, people like you and me in our home communities, because accessibility really does take root when people clearly see the benefits of accessibility to themselves, their families, their friends and their neighbours.

The doors to accessibility are opening slowly, but we do have to look at how far we've already come, and it's up to us to make certain that every door in Ontario is open to giving people with disabilities a fair opportunity to contribute and participate in our economy and in our society.

I think we're at a critical juncture in our journey to an accessible Ontario. As a province, we can't afford to overlook the extraordinary talent pool that people with disabilities represent.

It's been said that governments like to begin things, to declare new programs or new legislation. But good beginnings, frankly, aren't the measure of success here. What matters in the end is execution, performance and results. I hope that's what all of us in this House will be about: results. These must be our benchmarks for success. These are what will put us on the map to becoming a more inclusive society and a prosperous province. I believe we're well on the way to getting there.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The Speaker: Responses?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I'm honoured to speak today on this matter on behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus.

Since 1992, when the United Nations General Assembly first asked member countries to observe the International Day of Disabled Persons with the view to furthering integration in society of persons with disabilities, our province has made great strides in addressing the concerns of persons with disabilities.

I am proud of the Progressive Conservative caucus's long history of leadership, consultation and co-operation in addressing the concerns of persons with disabilities. Ontario was the first province to adopt a Human Rights Code, which was amended in 1981 to extend protection on the basis of disability.

Our previous Progressive Conservative government invested almost \$6 billion, one ninth of the provincial budget, in programs and services to increase opportunities and improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities and their families. We enhanced community living and independent living opportunities for persons of all ages. We made enhancements to education, to assist students with disabilities from preschool right through a transition to post-secondary education. We also created a new income support and employment program that better met the needs of persons with disabilities while respecting their dignity.

We were the first government in Canada to pass a Disabilities Act to tear down access barriers across our society, and we were pleased, as the opposition party, to provide comprehensive input and advice to strengthen this government's amendment to that act. These important advances improve not only the lives of Ontarians with disabilities and their families but also the health and prosperity of all Ontarians.

By enhancing the opportunities of persons with disabilities to participate in our great province's economic, social and cultural life, we build a better society.

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Today is a day to celebrate Ontario's achievements, but it is also a day to acknowledge that barriers still exist. On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I renew our commitment to working toward the day when we can truly say that persons with disabilities can enjoy full and equal access to all aspects of life that so many of us take for granted on a daily basis. I hope that all of us will give substantial consideration to our shared responsibility in working co-operatively toward a shared vision of an Ontario where all members of the society can fulfill their full potential.

I invite all Ontarians to join this House in recognizing International Day of Disabled Persons and committing to building bridges of opportunity for our friends, neighbours and families.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Every day, thousands of Ontarians face numerous barriers in gaining access to and fully participating in important activities such as jobs, access to information, communication, education at all levels, public transit and the use of goods, services and facilities that the public usually enjoys.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code both ban discrimination because of physical or mental disability. However, they have not been successful at effectively rooting out old barriers impeding persons with disabilities and preventing the erection of new barriers. Politicians of all stripes have acknowledged this: In 1998, the Legislature passed a resolution for a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The Conservatives subsequently introduced an Ontarians with Disabilities Act that fell short of the goals laid out in the 1998 resolution. The Liberals introduced legislation that was, in my view, bereft of

sharp teeth but which did make progress by improving the Conservative bill somewhat.

So much progress needs to be made to get the justice that people with disabilities need, and so much more could be done by this government. They have fallen short in so many areas. When I think about discrimination against people with disabilities, I think of people with disabilities and poverty. Most people with disabilities are poor. The Liberals promised to increase the Ontario disability support program rates by the cost of living every year, but they were raised by only 3% in 2004 and were frozen in 2005. The government wants to be praised for this picayune initiative, but they're not going to find cheerleaders in the NDP; they're going to have to go and find them somewhere else. Three per cent in 2004 keeps people with disabilities as poor as they had always been under the Conservative government. Things must change.

The Liberals also promised to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement from the disabled parents who receive ODSP benefits, and they broke this promise. In 2004-05, the full National Child Benefit Supplement would have provided \$1,511 a year for the first child, \$1,295 for the second child and \$1,215 for each additional child. That's equal to approximately \$120 a month for each child. Instead, the Liberals flow through only a dollar a week—and they want us to praise them for this. They will not find New Democrats as cheerleaders for those initiatives. They fall far short and keep people with disabilities poor.

Let's talk about disabilities and safe schools. Students with disabilities are being unfairly targeted for suspensions under the Safe Schools Act. They need more resources and reform of the act in order to meet their needs in the classroom. The government says, "Oh, we're having hearings," and they shelter themselves under these consultation hearings. The question they ask is: "What, if anything, is being done to make safer schools?" Well, this is not the question that young people with disabilities want to deal with. They're saying, "Keep us in the school," and their parents are saying, "Keep them in the school and deal with them. Help them. Don't throw them out of the school system." Yet that's what this bill, introduced by the Tories and maintained by the Liberals, does: It throws young people with disabilities out of the school system instead of keeping them in.

Third, disabilities and autistic children: The McGuinty government continues its fight in court to deny intensive behavioural intervention to children with autism after they reach the age of six. Preschool autism funding has been confirmed by an official manager for the FOI unit, which says that they will not be sending the \$2.6 million for those needy children that have autism; instead, it's been diverted to other programs.

This government is falling short on so many fronts. They need to do more.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Pour ceux avec des désabilités aujourd'hui, on peut célébrer certains avancements sur le dossier, mais certainement, pour les avancements qu'on attendait, tout ce que le monde

demande est simplement d'avoir une égalité et aussi une justesse quand ça vient aux services dont on a besoin pour être capable de vivre dans nos communautés.

C'est intéressant à voir qu'après toutes ces années, on est encore dans la même situation, que ceux avec des désabilités ont beaucoup de problèmes d'être capables d'avoir accès aux services dans les communautés. C'est très difficile de se déplacer, et, plus important, on se trouve dans la situation que ceux avec des désabilités sont toujours dans une situation où ils sont—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MILL CLOSURE

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Acting Premier. What specific measures has the Premier agreed to take, arising from his phone call with the mayor of Cornwall, to help the families and the community itself to deal with the devastating news that Domtar will be closing there, laying off ultimately a total of 910 people?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): In supplementary, I'll be passing this question to the Minister of Economic Development, who I'm sure can be of assistance to the honourable member.

I know the leader of the official opposition was not in the Legislature yesterday and may not yet be aware that in questioning of the Minister of Economic Development, the member from Halton referred to Ontario as a "once great province." I'm wondering if the honourable member might stand in his place and tell us whether he thinks, as we believe, that Ontario is a great province, or whether you believe, like your member from Halton, that Ontario is a "once great province."

Mr. Tory: I think that Ontario is a great province, and I point out that was absolutely no answer to my question with respect to what your Premier is doing for the people in Cornwall.

Now, the mayor of Cornwall said yesterday, and I quote, "We've lost the last of the industrial icons. [The Domtar] mill was the fabric of this community." The Premier spoke to him yesterday. I spoke with the mayor of Cornwall this morning, and he shared with me a couple of ideas of specifically things your government could do to help this community deal with these job losses.

At the top of his list, or one of the things near the top, was moving forward with the long-awaited ethanol plant. Your government has invited interested projects to apply for a capital grant program, but the way the program is structured, the money wouldn't flow until production had started in the given plant, which might be years from now.

In light of the Premier's phone call to the mayor of Cornwall yesterday and my discussion with him this morning, will the Acting Premier ensure that this capital funding is made available on an accelerated basis for the proposed Cornwall ethanol plant so that we might start to replace some of those jobs that are being lost in Cornwall with new jobs in the ethanol industry? Will you make that commitment?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The Minister of Agriculture, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): Our government and our ministry right now are in the process of considering the many applications to the ethanol growth fund that obviously has generated a good deal of interest. What I can say is that we are looking at all of those applications very carefully and we are committed to ensuring that the investments that we make in this initiative and in our communities are well placed.

Interjection.

Mr. Tory: The member for Leeds—Grenville said that sounded like a no. It was a no answer, not a no. I hope it's not a no for the people of Cornwall.

My final supplementary is this, again to the Acting Premier: In the fallout from Domtar's decision to close the Cornwall mill and the loss of tax revenue for the city associated with the layoffs and with that closure, the mayor also raised with me, when I spoke to him, the ongoing matter of Ontario Power Generation in the city of Cornwall over the annual premium paid to the city for the lands that the Robert H. Saunders generating station sits on. Instead of property taxes being paid to the city at fair market value, OPG pays an annual grant to the city. The problem is, the city figures it's getting short-changed to the tune of several million dollars a year.

Acting Premier, this is an issue that the Liberal member from this riding has repeatedly promised to deal with. Cornwall city council is waiting for answers. The mayor raised it with me as something that would help a city that's been dealt a devastating blow.

Can you tell us right now that, at the very least, you will ensure that a review is undertaken in connection with the ways in which we can provide assistance to Cornwall, a review of this deal between OPG and the city of Cornwall?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): Thank you for the question. I can assure you that we are quite prepared to sit down with the mayor of Cornwall and OPG and look at anything.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tory: Thank you for that, and I hope it happens soon.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My next question is again to the Acting Premier. It has been almost two weeks now since General Motors announced the loss of almost 3,900 direct jobs in Ontario over the next several years. While the Premier referenced those job losses as “a little bit of contraction,” I would like to know what specific steps the Premier has undertaken to help Oshawa deal with this economic body blow since we all learned of these layoffs two weeks ago.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): We certainly have been in touch with the mayor of Oshawa. The Premier is going to be paying a special visit. I know the Leader of the Opposition was there.

Let me just say that we are open to discussions with the city and the people of Oshawa about their economic development prospects for the future. Let me just add that Oshawa now has a very diversified economy. GM certainly is an important player in Oshawa, but I can also add this: With regard to plant number 2, we will make every effort to ensure that plant receives a new product mandate at the end of 2008 and see that plant continue in existence.

Mr. Tory: Again to the Acting Premier: I met yesterday, as was noted, with the mayor of Oshawa, representatives of the local chamber of commerce, General Motors and so on. Of course, they're justifiably concerned about the impact of these layoffs on their community. I asked them specifically what the provincial government could do to be of assistance, and at the top of their list was fixing the delays at the Canada-US border, the harmonization or the elimination of duplication between federal and provincial regulations in a number of areas, and ensuring that the 407 eastward expansion got moving forward at a much quicker pace so as to help in the further diversification of the Oshawa economy and region.

Acting Premier, can you give some assurance to people from Oshawa—to these community leaders, the mayor, the people from General Motors, the people from the chamber of commerce—that given this kind of list, which is a varied number of subjects, you will move forward with some kind of plan that we'll all hear about, a real plan to help Oshawa deal with a blow that will be crucial to them, notwithstanding your comments about their economy?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: Let me reassure the Leader of the Opposition and certainly the people of Oshawa and anyone who cares about the auto sector as much as this government does that we are doing everything we can to ensure that border remains open and to ensure that the infrastructure that your government, in the past, neglected for the longest time is going to be updated, so we will

have continued flow of goods across the border, ensuring that that border remains access to the greatest market in the world, our greatest trading partner south of the border.

Mr. Tory: So we're going to blame the previous government for the border, no answer on harmonizing regulations, and no answer as well with respect to 407. That's fine. That's zero for three.

Let's try one more time. There are a lot of families and communities out there waiting for help. As an example of just the slightest indication of caring about this, here's one more opportunity to show something tangible. As a meaningful step and an important symbol to people in eastern Ontario, where Cornwall is located, would you consider moving forward quickly with the Eastern Ontario Economic Development Fund Act reintroduced by the member for Lanark-Carleton today? Would you consider moving that forward quickly so we might implement that and provide some help to the communities in eastern Ontario, including Cornwall. Will you move it ahead?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: I would just say this to the Leader of the Opposition: The member you're referring to was a member of the cabinet of the previous government who sat for eight years and did nothing for eastern Ontario. Now he introduces a bill today and you would have us move on this bill.

We are open to sitting down with the people of Cornwall. In fact, we have dedicated resources in my ministry. The deputy minister is going to be working directly with the people who are associated with economic development in Cornwall, determining what the best approach might be and developing a strategy with all of the people associated with that region, not only the mayor of Cornwall, but other townships in the surrounding area.

I was there last spring. I sat and talked to people there. We had round table discussions about their economic prospects and what could be done. We discussed all of these various suggestions he's made, and most of those plans are moving forward.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Energy. Today another group added its voice to the long line of critics of your energy program. The respected Pembina Institute gave your government failing marks for your energy conservation efforts to date. The math is very simple: You are committed—I'm using your words—to \$10.5 billion for supply and a paltry \$163 million for energy conservation. This means that for every dollar you spend on power generation, you spend two cents on conservation. I think, and we think, you have your priorities all wrong.

Minister, your energy conservation program is a failure. My question to you is: When are you going to invest in real energy conservation as set out by the Pembina Institute?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I thank the member for the question. We're always pleased when there are reports coming in from interested parties around energy conservation and demand management. We welcome those reports as they come forward, as they help us have a discussion on the issues of conservation and demand side.

I don't know where the member gets his facts from. In fact, we've asked the conservation bureau to develop three very critical programs: One is for low income, one is for the lighting retrofit, and another is for appliances. Already, the numbers that are coming in from the utilities that have just been piloting these initiatives are staggering.

I haven't read the report; obviously, the member has. I look forward to having an opportunity to read the report over the weekend, and maybe we'll have some more discussion.

Mr. Prue: The report is kind of thin, and you should read it, because it doesn't take long. What it says is two cents. The Pembina Institute is the most respected voice in Canada when it comes to energy efficiency, and they say your conservation plan is a failure. They say in this report that the real payoff in energy conservation comes with improved standards in the building code to make buildings more efficient and energy-efficient appliances that are Energy Star compliant. Minister, will you commit right here—and you should commit even before you read this—to changes in the building code and to legislating energy-efficient appliances? We need an answer and we need it today. Is it yes or no?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Thank you very much for the supplementary. With respect to the Ontario Energy Efficiency Act, Ontario regulation 384/05 was passed on July 9, 2005. This particular regulation referenced national energy performance standards for four new products in addition to the 20 that are currently there. For example, we've increased air conditioning efficiency by 30%.

Interjection: Wow.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: It may be a slight "wow" to you, but for those folks who brought in their old air conditioning units—we thought maybe there would be 400 or 500—over 6,000 new air conditioning units went into low-income homes. So it might be irrelevant to the members of the third party, but I can tell you that it was very relevant for those people who now have far more efficient appliances due to this new regulation.

Mr. Prue: Page after page of the Pembina report—

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): You said it was thin.

Mr. Prue: It's not very big. Page after page—

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: All three of them.

Mr. Prue: Page after page, it's really not painting a very good picture of your ministry. They say your energy supply plan is a failure, your energy pricing plan is a failure, and now it's clear that your energy conservation is equally a failure.

Yesterday, 900 hard-working employees of Domtar found out that they were losing their jobs, in great part because of sky-high energy prices. Over the summer, we had at least three brownouts that could have been much worse, and now the most respected voice in energy conservation gives your energy conservation efforts failing marks. I repeat: Your energy conservation plan is a failure; when are you going to implement the recommendations made in this very good report?

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Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I find that member has a very rich imagination in terms of dealing with energy conservation, considering his was the party that cancelled everything.

The fact is, we welcome the report. I look forward to reading the report from the Pembina Institute, along with many others that have given some information and advice. We are creating that culture of conservation. Things are moving forward. We are the first jurisdiction in Canada and the second jurisdiction in North America to put a conservation leadership act before the House. It's in second reading. Pass it, and then you'll see how far we can go in terms of doing more on the conservation side.

MUNICIPAL ELECTION FINANCES LEGISLATION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): This time my question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This morning, Howard Hampton and I attended a press conference with city of Toronto councillors. There were eight of them in total. Three of them purport to be Liberals, two of them purport to be Conservatives and three were New Democrats—all political stripes. They are united by your failure to implement the election finances reforms passed by city of Toronto council over a year ago. In case you didn't get the hint when they passed that in September 2004, they re-passed it in September 2005.

My question to you is simple: Will you introduce legislation immediately to implement the full slate of election finances reforms passed by city of Toronto council and supported unanimously, I think, by the people of this city?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I welcome the question from the member. It's kind of interesting: I believe yesterday he was slamming a new City of Toronto Act, and now, of course, he wants something done about it. After every election, it is correct that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing undertakes to review the Municipal Elections Act to see if there are any problems with it or situations that need to be rectified. We have consultations with the Ministry of Education as well, because they are involved in elections through the school boards etc. From the general comments received, we made a judgment call that the Municipal Elections Act is working quite well and is currently meeting the needs of municipalities. Having said that, we're always prepared to look at

different ideas that come forward from municipalities, including the city of Toronto.

I look forward to the supplementary question.

Mr. Prue: Mr. Minister, tinkering and dithering is not what is required. What is required from you is some action. The city of Toronto has been requesting for more than a year. The city of Toronto wants meaningful election finances reform. What they want and what they're asking you for is to make the necessary amendments to the Municipal Elections Act to get the job done. They want a ban on all corporate and union donations and on banking surpluses to finance future campaigns, they want enforcement of municipal election rules by Elections Ontario and they want fundraising functions to be classified as election expenses. This is well supported in the city of Toronto. So my question again: Will you introduce the legislation they are requesting and implement these reforms, and will you do it now?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I thank the member for his supplementary. What the people of Toronto really want is a City of Toronto Act that works for them in the 21st century, and that's exactly what we've been working on for the last year and a half. If the member stays tuned, some time between now and Christmas we will be introducing a City of Toronto Act that I understand may be as many as 300 pages long, in which we are going to combine every act that the city of Toronto is involved in, in all the legislation that's out there, and we're going to make it work for the city of Toronto. It's absolutely essential, in order for Ontario to grow and prosper, that we have a capital city that we not only have great pride in but that also works in the 21st century, and that's what we intend to do.

Mr. Prue: Minister, you're quite fond of referring to the city of Toronto as a mature, responsible level of government, but you're not doing what is necessary for them to act electorally in a mature, responsible way. They have analyzed the problems in the city of Toronto, and they are quite legendary, but you're not giving them any credibility at all. You're ignoring the requests that Toronto council has made over the past year, and you have all but condemned the people of this city to a 2006 municipal election under the old and unfair municipal election finance rules, rules that council has voted twice to reform.

I'm telling you, if you introduce Toronto council's package of election financial reforms in the immediate future, we in the NDP will ensure speedy passage. My question to you is, will you do it?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Of course, speedy passage to the NDP does not necessarily mean speedy passage to the rest of us in here. We've had lots of experience of that over the last couple of years.

Let me say once again that we are taking every resolution we get from every municipality, including Toronto, very seriously. We're taking a hard look at the resolutions we got from them related to the Municipal Elections Act. We are not prepared to introduce that right now, momentarily, but I think if the member stays tuned,

something may very well happen in that regard, as well as what's more important, on the City of Toronto Act itself, which is what the people and the council of Toronto are really interested in. We want to make sure the city of Toronto functions as it should in the 21st century, so that they can provide to the citizens of Toronto the kinds of services the citizens of that community deserve.

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the minister responsible for the Securities Act: I point to today's Ottawa Sun headline "Criminal Probe Eyed: RCMP Looking into Potential Leak of Tax News Benefiting Grit-Friendly Investors." This is the latest in a week-long series of reports and expert comment surrounding insider trading following Minister Goodale's recent announcement. Of course we all know insider trader means that well-connected insiders get rich at the expense of retail investors, like seniors and working families.

Minister, to you personally: What have you done exactly, yourself or your ministry, to ensure that retail investors have been protected in this important circumstance?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I'm sure there's no political interference in the process that has been established through law in the province, and I don't intend to exert any political influence on this process.

I say again to you, I don't know whether you're speaking on behalf of your party, but I would hope you're not suggesting that the minister responsible should be ordering the Ontario Securities Commission when and when not to investigate. That is their role. It is important that the public have confidence in the independence of the Ontario Securities Commission. I hope you're not suggesting that I, as the minister, should be telling them when and when not to investigate. I would hope you would leave this matter where it should be, with the independent, arm's-length Ontario Securities Commission.

Mr. Hudak: This is the third occasion the minister has had in this assembly to indicate that he, in any way, cares about what has happened to retail investors, like seniors and working families—not one word from the minister expressing concerns about the suspicious nature of trading or what has happened to seniors and working families in these circumstances. The minister knows that under the new guidelines published by the OSC for disclosure of investigations, an investigation may be disclosed "when confidence in the capital markets could be harmed by a failure to confirm that a matter is under regulatory consideration."

Minister, it's a week-long story. Forensic experts have talked about the problems here. It has now reached American news sites like msnbc.com that something is severely amiss. Minister, don't you think it's appropriate, like the RCMP has done, that the OSC will finally say

they're looking into this matter. Minister, show that you care about the retail investors.

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Hon. Mr. Phillips: I would just say that I care deeply about investors in this province, and I want to assure them that there will not be political interference in the independent looking and protection of investors. I don't want investors to be reliant on whether or not the political body is telling the regulator, "Investigate here; don't investigate there."

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Well, you are saying that, and I say to the people of Ontario that I, as the minister, am not going to exert political influence on the independent Ontario Securities Commission. They have an independent role to play. They monitor the markets; they protect investors. We have strict laws to protect investors. The best way we can protect investors is to keep our political hands out of it and let the independent Ontario Securities Commission handle it. I would hope that you are not urging political interference in the Ontario Securities Commission on when they should investigate and when they should not.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Acting Premier: You and your Liberal colleagues supported the Domestic Violence Protection Act at second and third readings; so did the New Democrats. If you and your government are really concerned about ensuring access to judicial authorities by women in danger so that they can obtain appropriate restraining orders, why haven't you proclaimed that bill into law yet?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The item that the member raises is not one I am as familiar with as the minister. Accordingly, I'd like to take the question from the honourable member under advisement and ascertain to get back to him with a very prompt response, if he'd like to stand down the question, even later on in question period.

Mr. Kormos: If I may, perhaps it might be more effective to ask the supplementary now. You will recall that the Domestic Violence Protection Act would have assured women at risk access to judicial authorities, including justices of the peace, not in a matter of weeks or months, but literally in a matter of hours.

Reflect on Lori Dupont in Windsor, who was in the midst of an eight-month wait for a court hearing to obtain a restraining order when she was assassinated by her former boyfriend and co-worker. The Domestic Violence Protection Act would have applied to that type of relationship and to the type of threat she faced, and would have permitted a judicial authority to ex parte impose a restraining order on her assassin within hours of her making that complaint, and would have avoided an eight-month wait.

Sir, will you please tell us when this government will proclaim the Domestic Violence Protection Act which you supported when you were in opposition?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: There are two questions there. One of them deals with some specifics related to an individual circumstance. Accordingly, it's not appropriate to comment.

On the issue of the act the honourable member speaks about, I think it's important to put on the record in the Legislature that victims' advocates, police and other stakeholders have been clear in their opposition to the act. But our government has not, in the face of the challenges related to domestic violence, failed to act. We've been very aggressive in bringing forward our domestic violence action plan, and you may know that we recently launched the Ontario domestic assault risk assessment tool, a pilot project that is designed to help police officers and crowns to be more effective in helping to assess risk in abusive situations.

We all acknowledge in our communities and our society that this is one of those issues that requires significant attention from this government, and the initiatives I just outlined are an indication of the commitment of our government on this matter.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): My question is addressed to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Honourable Monte Kwinter. In early November, you, the Toronto Police Service and the Attorney General announced the creation of a gun amnesty program. The program allowed citizens to surrender their firearms to police without being charged with possession. Can you please update the members of this House about this particular program? How many firearms have in fact been turned over to police in the previous month?

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I want to thank the member for Etobicoke North for the question; I think it's important. As part of the PEACE initiative, the public education and crime eradication program that the Toronto Police Service has, we announced a gun amnesty. The gun amnesty was aimed at legal guns that are in the possession of people who own them legally. What we wanted to do was make sure, given that statistics show that over half of the guns that are illegal were obtained by breaking into homes and stealing those legal guns. So, as a result of that, I just wanted to report to this House as to how successful that amnesty was. There was a total of 261 guns, firearms, turned in, and 1,554 rounds of ammunition. Those guns are: 17 pistols, 16 revolvers, 66 shotguns, 132 rifles, 16 pellet guns, seven replica guns, and seven other guns—air guns—for a total of 261.

Mr. Qaadri: Minister, this issue is of extreme importance to Torontonians generally, but especially to the people of my own riding in Etobicoke North. Can you please inform this chamber about the other components

of the government's overall gun/crime prevention strategy? What are some of the other initiatives that the province is engaged in in an effort to combat the recent scourge of gun and gang violence in our city?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: As a follow-up to the amnesty, we also have had blitzes on those gun dealers who sell guns, to make sure their guns are fully secured, that they can document where those guns have been sold, to make sure that they have not fallen into the hands of those who will use them illegally. We've also had a Crime Stoppers tips line, and that particular program has been very successful. We've also expanded our guns and gangs task force by adding 32 crown attorneys. We've added 26 senior officers to deal with gun crimes. Also—and we're very proud of this—we went to the justice ministers' meeting in Whitehorse, and I can say that those who were there will admit that it was because of Ontario's persistence that we got the federal government to agree to raise the minimum mandatory sentence for gun-related offences.

PROPOSED WOODSTOCK HOSPITAL

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, today you had the opportunity to briefly speak with the fine people from the city of Woodstock and the surrounding area. They presented you with more than 20,000 postcards.

This community was promised a hospital five years ago in December. They have worked diligently since then; they have gone through all of the hoops that are necessary to ensure that they can go forward. For the last two years, the project has come to a halt. Your government has refused to approve their project moving forward to tender.

I would say to you today that they have moved forward. They have fulfilled all their obligations. They were given the approval. They need the final approval from you. You have given approval to other communities that are not this far along. Will you commit today that you will provide the capital funding in order that Woodstock can have that new hospital they so desperately need?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I found it interesting in the honourable member's question that she said that the project had come to a halt, somehow leaving the impression with the people in this Legislature and the people of Woodstock that that party, while the government in Ontario, had actually funded the project. But that's inaccurate. The regrettable circumstance that we inherited from that government was that they had run around pretty much everywhere in Ontario with these big rubber cheques, and they got their picture taken. It seemed to the local community that the money was in the bank. Alas, when we arrived we found that the kitty wasn't just dry but about \$5.6 billion overspent, and that doesn't count the capital side.

Notwithstanding that, the people of Woodstock do need a new hospital. I was clear to them in saying, "We aren't there yet. We're not in a position today to be able to go forward." Myself and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal continue to work to find the resources necessary for what everybody agrees is a much-needed and long-overdue project.

Mrs. Witmer: The Minister of Health knows full well that the information he has just communicated is not accurate. We provided the hospital with \$12 million. The money was available. Since then, you have taken funding intended for that hospital and Cambridge hospital and invested it elsewhere. For two years now, no action has been taken.

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I ask you again: For 24 months the project has been stalled—since your government came into office. Will you finally listen to these people who have fulfilled all of the obligations and will you today commit to allow Woodstock General Hospital to take that step to go to tender?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: One thing we learned today about the good people of Woodstock, represented very well, it would seem to me, by Mayor Harding, is that he doesn't take the partisan approach that the honourable member has chosen to take. He was a little bit more circumspect in recognizing that this is a project that has had about 30 years' worth of opportunities to go forward. Accordingly, in this House we all need to be clear.

There are finite resources in the province of Ontario. For a number of months around here in 2003, they pretended that that wasn't the case. The unfortunate reality left to us is that we've had to reconcile a level of commitment that did not have cash associated with it. The honourable member makes that point well for me. Twelve million dollars—that's like 20 cents on the dollar for what's necessary.

The point is, Woodstock needs a hospital and so do many other communities: An unprecedented \$5-billion investment is ongoing in hospitals in the province of Ontario. But we have more work to do. As we said to the people of Woodstock today, we are dedicated to working with them to find a solution for what is, what everybody would agree, a much-overdue—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is, in the absence of the finance minister, to the Acting Premier. Many property owners across Ontario are facing assessments that are 30%, 40%, 50%—I even heard one of 120%—higher than the last period. The vast majority of our citizens view the assessment system as unfair. In opposition, you and your colleagues said it was unfair and promised to fix it. Now you're in government. That's why the Ombudsman, I might add, is there investigating.

The fee for appealing is \$75, and many moderate- and low-income Ontarians find they don't have the \$75 to spend appealing an evaluation that was arrived at in an unfair, illogical and, to them, mysterious way. The fee costs 50% more than it did in the assessment year that just passed. My question to you is: Will you do the right thing and eliminate this usurious fee in time for this assessment year in March?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On the issue of fees, I do think it's appropriate in government to have fees which reflect the cost of provision of services. But the issue, more appropriately, is one addressed by the minister who has responsibility for the operation of that organization, and I would, of course, pass on your question to him.

On the matter of our assessment system, there has been a lot said about it. We all have well-expressed views and we've all heard concerns from a variety of different quarters. Appropriately, our government's interested in watching the initiative that the Ombudsman has undertaken, as reflected by the comments of the honourable member. Like everybody else, we'll be very interested in seeing what results it produces.

Mr. Prue: With the greatest of respect, property owners can't wait for the Ombudsman's report. They have to file their appeal by March 2006 or they accept the assessment as it is. They cannot wait for his report. The deadline will have passed by then.

I am suggesting that the very least you can do, while you're waiting for that report for cash-strapped homeowners, is to eliminate the unfair fee. Why would you allow it to have increased by the astonishing amount of 50% in one year? Will you eliminate the fee today?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: No, I don't think so. As I said to my honourable friend in the earlier question, the government does have some obligation to ensure that those services that are provided can be provided in a fashion that is dependent on having a sufficiency of resources.

The honourable member presented his question. As I said to him in the first answer, I'm not the line minister with responsibility for that. I will take the question under advisement and refer it to my honourable friend. But I would just urge my honourable friend to be certain that the information he was providing with respect to the filing deadline is, indeed, accurate.

BEST START PROGRAM

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. First of all, I would like to thank the minister for coming to my riding today to visit the school of St. David. St. David is a school that has a fabulous early learning program and is going to be one of the new Best Start program sites. We had an opportunity to see the facilities there, the fabulous programs that are being supplied at the moment, and a peek at what's going to be happening

in the near future. Thank you very much for taking the time to come down and see us there.

I've heard time and time again from families I speak to, and I know it first-hand, that there is a tremendous need for quality child care, not just for a place to take our children but for high-quality early learning opportunities, because it's those early years that are so crucial to setting people off on the life they're going to be living and the learning they're going to be doing the rest of their life. We've heard there are some expansion plans underway, and I'd like to know if you could give us the details of that today, please.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I want to thank the member for Stoney Creek for being a very warm, welcoming and gracious host. I have to tell you, it's very clear that her constituents love her. They spoke very highly of the work she does for the people of Stoney Creek.

I was there this morning to give an update on where we stand on the expansion of early learning and child care spaces under our Best Start plan. It was just this summer that we announced the targets for the first three years of this program, on which we are working in partnership with the federal government and municipalities. We announced in the summer that we would have 25,000 new child care spaces by April 2008, and this morning we announced that, due to the hard work, the diligent commitment of municipalities, we will be more than halfway there by April 2006.

Ms. Mossop: The other thing we were hearing this morning from the people there was how much this program is appreciated. I think it was absolutely evident in the fact that the people on the ground in Stoney Creek were able to respond and put together programs and those spaces so quickly after the announcement first came.

I think what came out of today's meetings is that it takes a village to raise a child, but sometimes it takes a province and an entire Legislature full of committed people to raise a child, to support the families and to support their mothers who need to be supported. That is who raises children in this province—a village and a province—and that's what we're doing. I want to know more about the details of the program in my demonstration site, because Hamilton is going to be a demonstration site. We're going to get the full 10-year program in three years.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: Of the expansion, Hamilton will actually have 2,390 new spaces. In addition, Hamilton is one of the three demonstration communities, so in fact Hamilton East will have a wide range of interconnected services, services that range from screening through to assessment services, preschool testing, training for parents, school readiness programs, and linkages to a wide variety of community partners who are serving the interests of kids. Many of them were there this morning.

I want to take this opportunity to also thank Mayor Di Ianni for being there and being so supportive, and all the other municipalities. The two other demonstration sites

are in Timiskaming and in the Lambton–Chatham–Kent area. They're all working hard on behalf of all communities, including —

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is for the Minister of Health. Joining us in the west gallery today, for her fourth time in this Legislature, is a colorectal cancer patient from St. Catharines, Suzanne Aucoin. She has been travelling to Queen's Park to try to get her message across to you about what a precarious position you and your government have put her in, in her struggle with colorectal cancer.

Minister, we established on November 14 that you are paying for colorectal treatments in the United States at around US\$24,000 per Ontario resident. It took you 48 hours to reject this woman's application. My question to you is, why are you paying US\$24,000 for treatment in the United States when Erbitux treatments can be provided here in the province of Ontario by our cancer clinics at a cost of \$3,500?

1520

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think the honourable member knows that the process we're following in the province of Ontario relates to the necessity of the manufacturer of Erbitux filing with the DQTC the desire to have the product listed as one of those on our benefits. There are 22,000 products in Canada that have received a notice of compliance, and about 4,000 of those are on our current list for the provision of service. Accordingly, we await the company's decision to bring that forward so that appropriate scientific analysis can be made to determine the effectiveness of this drug, keeping in mind that of course there are a variety of therapies available for the treatment of a variety of different cancers. That is something that we await from the company.

Mr. Jackson: Minister, I have a copy of a memo from Health Canada and its special access program for cancer drugs. This memo confirms that not only are Canadians, and in particular Ontarians, eligible to make application; it confirms that Bristol-Myers Squibb, the manufacturer of Erbitux, is prepared to provide it to institutions directly as a hospital product. I have the price listing here.

My question again to you is this: You persistently throw process delay in front of this important issue to cancer patients in our province. We have a situation where the company has agreed to provide it to our hospitals. The federal government is processing these applications and they feel that it is appropriate to administer. Why are you spending US\$24,000 to pay for this treatment in the United States when it can be administered now in Ontario for \$3,500?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The challenge with the way the honourable member presents all of these questions—and it stands in sharp contrast to exactly the way that he played a role in a previous government—is that the

honourable member has determined that there should be no clinical analysis associated with any product. As was requested by the honourable member on one of the previous instances when this question was raised, I have asked the ministry to go back and review on clinical grounds the appropriateness of offering products to a variety of individuals. That's what we will continue to do.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Health Canada has approved it.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: To these who wish to heckle about Health Canada, the government that cut drug funding in this province, the notice of compliance that relates to this Health Canada approval reflects 22,000 products in Canada. The government of Ontario has approximately 4,000 products that are—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): Several federal Liberal members, including the chair of the interim committee on national security, Derek Lee, confirm that outgoing Etobicoke–Lakeshore MP Jean Augustine will be offered a job by the McGuinty Liberals. Acting Premier, will you confirm or deny this is the case?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm neither in a position to confirm nor reject the issue that—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Well, I'm not in a position to do so, but as an Etobian—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): An Etobian?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: That's what we call it: Etobian. It means, "where the alders grow." It's a First Nations word.

I have no knowledge that we've made any offer. But I can tell the honourable member that I know this person well—Jean Augustine—and when I think about the 2,700 public appointments that my ministry has some responsibility for, were she to make herself known, she'd be the kind of candidate that I would be very, very willing to advance. She's an accomplished person, an accomplished public servant, a strong voice for her local community and has a strenuous background in education. For all these reasons, I believe that if she's willing to continue to serve the public in some fashion, we should look at it.

Mr. Marchese: I know Jean too—so do many of the members here—and think she's a very able person. We thought, as a person of colour—one of the few—she should have stayed—and wanted to stay, as far as we know.

The deal was apparently sealed by Karl Littler, the national Liberal campaign director, and Laura Miller, who works in the Ontario Premier's appointments office. As well, Liberal MPs told the media that your government guaranteed Madame Augustine a job. Now she has

vacated her seat to make room for controversial parachute candidate Michael Ignatieff.

My question is very simple: (1) Who from the government has been involved in this arrangement, and (2) what did your government agree to do in an effort to smooth the waters in Etobicoke–Lakeshore?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Firstly, to stand behind the empty seat of the member who has parachuted herself into the next riding is a very interesting use of the word “parachute.”

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): She walked.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Even if there was water, probably.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Acting Premier.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Secondly, I know Laura Miller well, and I know that she does not work in public appointments in our government. Thirdly, I said in my earlier answer that there’s been no arrangement—the honourable member used the word “arrangement” in his question. I believe the Premier said yesterday that there is no arrangement; there’s been no offer. But, like I said before, this is a fine public servant. We’re always looking for good people to serve, and we obviously appoint people from a wide variety of perspectives to do that.

DRIVE CLEAN

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Recently, you announced changes to the Drive Clean program. Through the progressive and hard work of our car manufacturers for years, many of us believed that the newer cars, with on-board technologies and creative design, were not part of the cause of major pollution. The ministry’s review of Drive Clean proved this assumption to be true. Minister, for the benefit of all the car owners in Ontario, and related stakeholders, would you do us a favour and outline exactly which vehicles will now fall under the Drive Clean program and the other changes that have been made to Drive Clean since the review was done?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I want to thank the member from Brant for his question. If the community of Brant doesn’t already know, they certainly have a great advocate here in the Legislature on behalf of their community.

The member raises an important question. Especially as the world comes to Canada’s door and we go to the Kyoto Protocol discussions, it’s important to remember that one half of greenhouse gases in Ontario comes from vehicles. So the Drive Clean program is an important component of our battle against greenhouse gases.

However, when the ministry took a look at our Drive Clean program recently—under the previous minister, we accelerated that review—we determined that 99% of vehicles less than five years old passed the emissions test. It doesn’t make sense to ask Ontarians to bring their

vehicles in. It’s a waste of time and money when vehicles pass that test 99% of the time. What we wanted to do was refocus the program for vehicles most likely to pollute, and starting January 1, 2006, vehicles will only be tested when they are five years and older, and every two years thereafter.

1530

Mr. Levac: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that.

You mentioned the age of vehicles tested. I have received several serious and some heated inquiries from my constituents about this very factor: basing the tests on the age of the vehicle. I have a number of constituents who own classic cars, antique cars and historic cars. These are vehicles well past the age set out and fall into the mandatory testing category that’s newly set, yet these vehicles are not used on a daily basis. My constituents take their cars to antique and classic car shows and they take great pride in the upkeep of their restored vehicles. I’m sure we have all seen the parades of classic and antique cars going down the highways in a bright, sunny summer, and even in a Santa Claus parade. This is a very serious hobby, the restoration of old cars.

With the Drive Clean announcement, my constituents have expressed great concern that you have categorized their hobby as a threat to the environment. Minister, would you please clarify for us the intent in respect of classic, historic and antique cars that are maintained as a hobby and what you classify as an historic vehicle, for the sake of my constituents? We’d appreciate a clarification.

Hon. Ms. Broten: I’m really pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Ontarians about the issue related to historic vehicles. I can absolutely understand the passion they have for those old vehicles. With this renewed and revitalized Drive Clean program, we are ending the exemption for vehicles 20 years and older, starting with vehicles manufactured after 1988. So those vehicles that are after 1988 and have always been in our Drive Clean program will not be excluded when they reach 20 years of age. However, the Highway Traffic Act defines vehicles of at least 30 years as historic. Those vehicles will continue to be excluded from the program.

We understand the passion that Ontarians have for those vehicles and we appreciate the fact that they’re not out on the roads each and every day. What we want to do is focus our resources and attention on those vehicles that pollute the most. As a result, we’re reforming the program to focus on those vehicles that make sense from a perspective of keeping the air clean and keeping Ontarians strong.

NATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources. Chief Bill Restoule of Dokis First Nation has been asking for a chance to meet with you. In fact, the chief twice offered to give you a tour; he wrote to you once in March and

once in June. I have a copy of his invitation. It includes a fish fry, so I'd suggest you take him up on that offer.

I understand that you agreed to meet with him but haven't followed through. He has a number of issues, many of which are provincial. My question is simple. Will you meet with Chief Restoule and the council of Dokis First Nation?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): Over a year ago, I did meet with representatives from the First Nation and they did present many of the issues that they wanted to address. We're addressing some of those issues that involve a provincial park in that area and trying to make some adjustments to the reserve area in regard to that provincial park in order to get better access for the reserve. We are working with the First Nation on that.

I am planning to make that second visit, to make a visit to the reserve early in the new year, and I look forward to that.

Mr. Miller: I'm pleased to hear you're planning on visiting, because the chief is frustrated. I spoke with him yesterday. I received the same invitation you did. In fact, I visited the reserve in March, and after my tour I wrote to the province regarding the Dokis's desire to develop hydro generation. I also wrote requesting consideration for bridge repairs. Bridges are vital links to move fibre through and off the reserve. Chief Restoule and the Dokis band council are working very hard to stimulate economic development, and forestry is very important to them. They are still trying to get cellular service and high-speed Internet access. At every turn, they are being blocked by one level of government or another.

I'm glad to hear you are planning on going, but I'd love you to make a firm commitment to visit either before the year is out or in early January, because, as I say, the chief is very frustrated with government inaction and he's caught between the various levels of government.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I do give the member a firm commitment that early in the new year I will visit. I would hope the member would also be there at that time. I think it's very important that we do that. What I've been doing in the last few months is working with the aboriginal leadership in this province on trying to get a dialogue opened up on economic development.

Working with the Minister of Health, we are working on a consultation with regard to how to most appropriately utilize the health money that the federal government is transferring to the province. The Minister of Health is very interested in making sure we do that in a way that is consistent with the values of aboriginal people in this province, and we're doing that. So I want to use my time, when I'm not in the Legislature, to make those visits, to make sure that we can do that, and I hope you will do that with me.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have a question to the Acting Premier.

Earlier this week, at a public meeting, hundreds of concerned parents and school officials tried to send you a message about the Safe Schools Act. Parents were told to confine their remarks to two questions about (1) what, if anything, is being done to make schools safer and (2) how current safety measures are affecting students. Owen Leach of the Organization of Parents of Black Children said the following: "The questions they pose presuppose the framework of the Safe Schools Act is OK, which I disagree with." Minister, the Safe Schools Act throws at-risk students out of the school. When are you going to start providing the supports they need to stay in school?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Obviously I'm tremendously proud to be part of a government in which two years of life has meant that we've brought tremendous new life to our education system in Ontario—\$1.9 billion in additional investments. On the issue of the Safe Schools Act more particularly, I know you've had a chance to ask that of my colleague the Minister of Education. He has indicated to you that a significant consultation is ongoing as we seek out community input and advice. Accordingly, I think it's appropriate for that consultation to be given an opportunity to make its way forward.

What we underscore as essential in this province is that our future economic prospects are based very much on our capacity to keep more of our young people in school and to give them enhanced opportunity in a post-secondary context. I think, as a government, our priorities of this have been made clear. There are more initiatives forthcoming, and I know the honourable member will look forward to those.

PETITIONS

DIABETES TREATMENT

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers \$13 billion a year and increasing! It is the leading cause of death and hospitalization in Canada. Many people with diabetes cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing the disease. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood and even reuse lancets and needles. These cost-saving measures often have tumultuous and disastrous health consequences.

"Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes. We think it is in all Ontario's and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies

that each individual needs to obtain optimum glucose control. Good blood glucose control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control."

Signed by thousands of people and presented on behalf of the member from Simcoe North.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I sign this petition enthusiastically.

1540

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): This is a petition on behalf of cancer patients:

"Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

"Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan, with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

"Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

"Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors" and oncologists;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy

for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of patients."

I present this on behalf of several pages of petitioners.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):

I want to thank Sue Parsons from my riding for bringing this petition to my attention:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close the Rideau Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing the Rideau Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the Rideau Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep the Rideau Regional Centre open as a home for people with developmental disabilities and to maintain it as a 'centre of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I support this petition, and I affix my name to it.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): "Whereas during the 2003 election campaign Dalton McGuinty promised to establish a standing committee on education to ensure transparency in education funding; and

"Whereas such a committee has not been established; and

"Whereas Ontario's education system is not properly funded and there is no transparency in funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately establish a standing committee on education to hold public hearings every year on the effectiveness of education funding."

I support this petition strongly, and I will sign it.

RECREATION IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I have a petition written to the Ontario Legislature:

"We, the undersigned correctional employees, ask that you restore recreation in Ontario's detention centres to the levels that existed before 2000. Inmates are detained for years in some cases. These inmates are frustrated and require diversion in the form of recreational activities. Recreation provides an outlet for inmate hostilities and aggressions that otherwise could end up having significant human cost.

"The opportunity is there to put the correction back in corrections and allow our recreation staff to help re-socialize our inmates through productive interactions in a recreational environment, thus making our detention centre safer for all parties concerned. This government needs to realize the past mistakes of previous governments by following a safe path toward rehabilitation, while moving away from programs of warehousing that exist today."

It's signed by all of the members from various sectors of this particular ministry. I sign my name to this, and pass it over to Cara.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I've been waiting for some time to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, but the time arrives for all things that wait.

"Whereas the federal Income Tax Act at present has a minimum amount of medical expenses for which a taxpayer is entitled to claim a non-refundable income tax credit;

"Whereas the health and medical expenses of every citizen in the province of Ontario, great or small, affect their overall net income;

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government moved in their 2004 budget, May 18 ... to delist publicly funded medical services such as chiropractic, optometry examinations and physiotherapy services;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Income Tax Act remove the present minimum amount of medical expense for which a taxpayer is entitled to claim a non-refundable income tax credit."

This makes eminently good sense. I'll be signing it on behalf of many of my constituents in the riding of Durham and presenting it to Jessica, one of the ever-present pages here.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I've got a "Petition to Rescind Joint Board Decision (June 8, 2005) Approving the Applications of Dufferin Aggregates to

Expand Its Mining Licence in the Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"There are numerous reasons for rescinding the joint board decision, including the following:

"Whereas the decision contravenes the purpose of the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act;

"Whereas the decision sets a precedent for quarry expansion licences on the Niagara Escarpment;

"Whereas this decision could lead to habitat destruction for species of concern;

"Whereas escarpment rural lands are equivalent to buffer designation under the United Nations' framework for a biosphere reserve (buffer designation is expected to protect the sensitive nature of the core protected areas);

"Whereas, to attempt to maintain the significant wetlands and the streams course, water will have to be pumped in perpetuity;

"Whereas this decision allows for pumping 50 feet ... below the water table;

"Whereas the 50-foot dams to be constructed have a potential for failure;

"Whereas aggregate can be readily accessed close to market off the Niagara Escarpment in land that is not protected or at risk;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario to:

"Issue an order by the Lieutenant Governor in Council ... rescinding the decision made by the joint board dated June 8, 2005, approving the applications of Dufferin Aggregates in regards to this matter;"

Further, "Issue an order by the cabinet substituting for the decision of the board on this matter, a decision rejecting the applications of Dufferin."

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth, is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth, under the leadership of Mayor Mike MacEachern and former Mayor Larry Keogh, has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture and the Liberal government step in to ensure that the Banting homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

I've signed that petition.

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition that has been prepared by a community activist in my riding named Sonny Sansone. He keeps giving me copies of this petition, and he's very passionate about it. The petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Bill Mauro, MPP for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, introduced a private member's bill, Bill 4, that amends the Health Insurance Act and seeks to make the prostate specific antigen (PSA) test an insured service under OHIP; and

"Whereas a PSA test is one of the means used to screen for possible prostate cancer, the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Canadian men; and

"Whereas the PSA test is used as an indicator of the likelihood that a man has prostate cancer and can be very helpful in guiding men in deciding whether to continue with further testing; and

"Whereas PSA testing in Ontario is only covered if recommended by a doctor and done in a hospital setting, otherwise costing Ontario men approximately \$25, a fee which could be a deterrent to the underprivileged;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill Mauro's private member's bill, Bill 4, which makes PSA testing an insured service under the Ontario health insurance plan."

I agree with this petition, and I sign it and forward it to page Andrew here.

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I affix my signature in full support.

1550

MANDATORY RETIREMENT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a very timely petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas existing legislation enforcing mandatory retirement is discriminatory; and

"Whereas it is the basic human right of Ontario citizens over the age of 65 to earn a living and contribute to society; and

"Whereas the provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Yukon and the Northwest Territories have also abolished mandatory retirement in various forms; and

"Whereas ending mandatory retirement is a viable means of boosting the Ontario labour force and accommodating the growing need for skilled workers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Ontario government should act by abolishing mandatory retirement in the province of Ontario. This is best achieved by passing Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign this petition.

PROPOSED OXFORD HOSPITAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition signed by hundreds of people in my riding of Oxford and Woodstock.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, would like to impress upon the government the need for a new hospital being built in Woodstock, Ontario. This project has had tremendous support from the local community and is seen as being vital to the enhancement of local medical services and as an attraction for new doctors and new specialists."

Following are signatures of Ontario residents endorsing this petition, and I affix mine to it too.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas gun violence has been on the rise in the province of Ontario over the past year;

"Whereas such violence has had a devastating effect on communities across this province;

"Whereas this propensity toward gun violence is born largely out of neglect and abandonment on the part of previous governments toward youth and the issues and concerns they face;

"Whereas programs supporting youth such as employment and recreation are essential in diverting youth from pursuing and embracing a culture of crime;

"Whereas we applaud Premier Dalton McGuinty for his quick response to this issue by immediately meeting with members of affected community groups and committing the government of Ontario to action;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request that the government of Ontario, as part of its strategy to deal with gun violence, restore and fund more programs that fund initiatives that empower youth like employment and recreation."

I agree with the petition. I affix my signature to it and give it to page Adam here today.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Before we get to orders of the day, I want to rise, pursuant to standing order 55, and give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, December 5, in the afternoon, we'll have second reading of Bill 36, the Local Health Systems Integration Act; in the evening, second reading of Bill 37, the Respect for Municipalities Act.

On Tuesday, December 6, in the afternoon, we'll have second reading of Bill 37, the Respect for Municipalities Act; in the evening, second reading of Bill 36, the Local Health Systems Integration Act.

On Wednesday, December 7, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 211, mandatory retirement; the evening is to be confirmed.

On Thursday, December 8, in the afternoon, we will have an Opposition Day; the evening is to be confirmed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESPECT FOR MUNICIPALITIES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE RESPECT DES MUNICIPALITÉS

Mr. Gerretsen moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 in relation to municipalities / Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la protection des contribuables en ce qui concerne les municipalités.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes Mr. Gerretsen when he's ready.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm very pleased to start off the debate today on this very important piece of legislation that will have, I'm sure, the support of every member in this House. It is a bill that will truly start to empower our municipalities to lead the way in the 21st century.

I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Scarborough Centre.

Our government came to office determined to work in a different way. We aim to treat municipalities with the respect that they deserve. I know some members are laughing about that on the other side of the House, but municipalities are an extremely important form of government in this province. They are the closest to the people. The people we elect to that level are in day-to-day contact with their constituents and they deal with very serious issues. We aim to treat municipalities with the respect they deserve. We are working hard to foster local governments that are responsive, responsible, self-reliant and accountable. We want to accomplish this by giving local governments the tools and the flexibilities they need to more effectively serve their communities.

Our government is working to build an Ontario that offers the highest quality of life to our communities and to our citizens. We recognize that municipal governments today face many challenges. Our government understands that municipal leaders are in the best position to know what the local communities need to prosper and thrive.

That's why our government recognized early on that the memorandum of understanding with AMO is of such importance that it needed to be put into legislation. We have been consulting with AMO at monthly meetings, and I'm happy to report that the process is working well. We understand that if our decisions will affect municipalities' bottom line or their ability to get the job done, they deserve a say. We've gone even further by adding to that memorandum of understanding a protocol that gives AMO a say in federal-provincial negotiations that directly affect municipalities.

Ontario is the first province in Canada to have signed such an agreement. This past year, it has been satisfactorily put to the test on a number of occasions. AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, has been involved in federal-provincial discussions on such issues as immigration, affordable housing and the transfer of the federal gas tax funds, all three matters that led to successful agreements between the Ontario government, the federal government, and the municipalities involved.

Another fine example of provincial-municipal co-operation is the joint review of the City of Toronto Act and the more than 350 other pieces of private legislation that apply to the city of Toronto. We are looking forward to giving Toronto the tools to determine and manage its own future and prosperity. The mayor of Toronto, Mayor Miller, has asked for new fiscal authority for his city. AMO has endorsed the idea of new fiscal tools for municipalities. The joint task force that was set up between our ministry and government and city hall here in Toronto has asked for these powers. Just last week, the Governing Toronto Advisory Panel that Mayor Miller set up to give him advice on the city of Toronto has asked for these powers.

We think it's the right thing to do. If the opposition members do not like it, then maybe they should say why they are against the city of Toronto having the types of powers it needs to function properly in the 21st century.

The same intention can be found in our collective efforts to reform the Municipal Act. This review has benefited from consultations with our municipal partners and stakeholders. We have had working groups with municipalities, with groups representing the municipal sector and with groups representing the business sector in our communities. We will be continuing to consult with municipalities on changes to the Municipal Act over the coming weeks and months. I'm confident that the end result of these reviews will be appropriate powers and suitable accountability for all of Ontario's municipalities.

1600

Our government's support for municipalities does not end at legislation. For almost a year now, municipalities with transit systems have been receiving a share of the provincial gas tax measures. That share is now 1.5 cents per litre and will increase to two cents per litre in October 2006.

A few months ago, our government, AMO and the city of Toronto signed agreements with the federal government for the transfer of the federal gas tax funds to municipalities and for additional transit funding. Those agreements will bring \$1.8 billion for municipal infrastructure over five years and, when finalized, another \$310 million for transit over the next two years.

Our government took an historic approach by stepping back and letting Toronto and AMO work directly with the federal government to decide the best way to share the federal gas tax revenues. A level of municipal involvement like that has never occurred before in Ontario or indeed in any other province in Canada.

In addition, gas tax funds are flowing from the federal government to local governments without any clawback whatsoever from the province of Ontario. As the Premier said in the House recently, our government is strongly in favour of doing everything we reasonably can to put the city of Toronto on a stronger footing. We on this side of the House understand that a strong Toronto makes for a strong Ontario and a strong Canada. The Leader of the Opposition may not be in favour of that, and he may choose to disregard that reality.

However, the Respect for Municipalities Act, 2005, if passed, would exempt bills that give municipalities new fiscal authority from the requirements to hold a referendum. The Ontario government is not contemplating introducing new taxes or increasing any existing taxes. The proposed act would pave the way for decisions about new tools within a community to be made by the leadership of that community through its council, through the actions of their locally elected representatives.

The Respect for Municipalities Act, 2005, if enacted, would allow introduction of a bill giving new fiscal authority to the city of Toronto and allow new fiscal tools to be part of the new City of Toronto Act. Similar fiscal tools could be considered in the future for other municipalities through amendments to the Municipal Act, as I've previously stated.

Support for these new fiscal tools for municipalities like Toronto has come from many quarters. The Associ-

ation of Municipalities of Ontario has called on our government to grant municipalities access to new revenue tools to fund key services. The recent final report of the Joint Task Force to Review the City of Toronto Acts recommended that new fiscal tools be provided for the city. In its recent report, the Governing Toronto Advisory Panel speaks to the city of Toronto's need for new fiscal tools.

Some support for the city of Toronto seems to ebb and flow. It's hard to determine, for example, just exactly where Mr. John Tory stands, because he's not prepared to do what is absolutely essential to recognize Toronto's distinction as a mature, responsible government that our government is prepared to work with and put on a stronger footing. Mr. Tory is not prepared to recognize that, although on May 7, 2004, he is quoted in the Toronto Star as saying the following—the member for Oxford should listen to this—“We have to re-examine completely the relationship between the municipal and provincial government to give city governments more latitude to raise some of their own revenue if they choose to do so.”

We agree with the statement that Mr. Tory made then. Perhaps during this debate he will tell us why he has now decided that he's not prepared to support the city of Toronto in putting that city on a stronger footing for the benefit of all Ontarians.

Mayor David Miller understands. He wrote the Premier saying the following, and I quote directly from his letter: “Toronto's fiscal sustainability is, in part, related to the revenue tools at its disposal. It would be regrettable indeed if a bold, visionary initiative of your government is hamstrung by the ongoing impact of the actions of the previous government. I would like to encourage the provincial government to take action to eliminate the impediment to reform of Toronto's enabling legislation and future options for Toronto's overall fiscal framework.”

I say to the leader of the official opposition and to my critic, the member for Oxford, that you can't have it both ways. You either support the new City of Toronto Act with the new fiscal authority or you don't. The relevant question is whether or not the opposition members support the people of Toronto, as I stated earlier today during question period, and support the city in wanting a new City of Toronto Act. That's what it's all about in the long run.

The people of Toronto want to know where Mr. Tory stands, where the Toronto MPPs stand, in both the official opposition and the third party, and whether or not they believe that the city should have more powers, both fiscal and legislative, in order to restructure itself.

This proposed legislation, if passed, would treat Toronto and Ontario's municipalities with the respect they deserve. It is part of our ongoing effort to give municipal governments the tools and the flexibility they need to more effectively serve not only their communities but, even more important, the people who live in those communities.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm delighted to join in this debate. It's a pretty simple bill, the respect for municipalities bill. It's only a one-pager and it simply says that we shouldn't have to, as a province, go to a province-wide referendum if we choose to give revenue-generating tools to our municipalities. I think it's fairly simple, I think it's pretty straightforward, and I find it hard to believe that anybody would be in opposition to that. It just makes sense to have the ability to give to our municipalities the tools that I think municipalities have shown through their maturity over the years that they deserve. I think most Ontarians would be surprised that we even have to debate this. They would be surprised we have to do this in the first place. But that's part of the legacy left behind by the former Tory government and it's something we have little choice but to do.

This bill is about respect. It's about respect for cities, towns and villages, it's about respect for the elected representatives who serve those cities, towns and villages and it's about respect for the people who elect those representatives.

I know how difficult it was under the previous government for municipalities to get respect when they came to Queen's Park. I know how difficult it was under the previous regime, which seemed to take pride in disrespecting municipalities through their actions. I must say, I'm very disappointed that thus far John Tory and his caucus appear determined to return this province to those dark days, appear determined to continue that legacy of disrespect that was begun under the previous government, the days of treating municipalities like they were outcasts, like they were a lesser form of government. Under the McGuinty government, those days are long gone. We now respect municipalities in this province and this act is a reflection of the respect that we have for them as mature levels of government.

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I think this legislation and Mr. Tory's response to this legislation will be a test for Mr. Tory to determine, does he believe in the things that he believed in when he ran for mayor of Toronto? I for one, as all of you know, supported him when he ran for mayor of Toronto. Does he believe in those things? Does he believe in a stronger Toronto, or does he not? Was that just something he said when he was running for mayor of Toronto that he no longer believes, or has he been co-opted by his caucus to believe something other than that? Whatever, I'm very disappointed that Mr. Tory has yet to come out and show the leadership that I think he owes this province in indicating that, in fact, he supports this approach, an approach for a stronger Toronto, an approach for respect for municipalities.

I have to quote Mr. Tory. When he was running for the Tory leadership, back on May 7, 2004, he said the following: "We have to re-examine completely the relationship between the municipal and provincial government to give city governments more latitude to raise some of their own revenue"—let me repeat that: "give

city governments more latitude to raise some of their own revenue"—"if they choose to do so. They will then be accountable for whatever they choose to do to fund some things that may be priorities for those cities. Right now they have to go and ask for permission to do everything. I don't think that's right." That's what Mr. Tory said then. What does he believe now?

Interjection.

Mr. Duguid: That's exactly it. A member on the other side is doing this. Who knows what he believes exactly now, but it certainly doesn't seem to be supporting this legislation. Judging by comments made by members of his caucus, they do not seem to be supporting this legislation to give respect to our municipalities, and to give us the ability as a government to do exactly what Mr. Tory suggested in May 2004 that we should be doing: giving municipalities—and particularly he was referring here to the city of Toronto—the ability to raise revenues, the ability to look to alternative sources of revenue. This is certainly a test to see whether Mr. Tory does believe in a strong Toronto or doesn't. I think Mr. Tory, judging by however he decides here—it will be a good indicator of whether he's willing to stand up for the city of Toronto or whether he's going to cater to political needs or the desires of his caucus members.

I look at what this government has done to show respect for municipalities and I compare that to the previous government. I look back at the previous government, how they downloaded on municipalities: hundreds of millions of dollars downloaded on municipalities. I think of the record of this government in our first 24 months in office: uploading public health; providing two cents of the gas tax to municipalities, which will soon be effective across this province; investing big dollars in capital for public transit. I look at the \$5.6-billion deficit left behind. You know, that's one thing that the previous government left behind. The other thing left behind was a very significant deficit in terms of infrastructure. I think of the \$30 billion our government is committing to invest in narrowing that infrastructure gap. I look at the \$900 million in COMRIF funding going forward for bridges and roads and water and waste water projects across this province.

Then I think of the fact that the previous government, for eight years, ignored demands from right across the province. All municipalities were calling for reforms to the Ontario Municipal Board. I'm proud that very soon the McGuinty government will be moving forward on very significant reforms to the Ontario Municipal Board. We're respecting what municipalities have said to us. We're respecting many of the things that they have asked for.

I recall, frankly, being a member of Toronto council and threats coming from the province that, "We're going to downsize your council if you say anything we don't agree with." That was over and over again.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): They did.

Mr. Duguid: They not only did it; they threatened over and over again to do that. We don't believe in that approach. We believe in working with municipalities. We believe that they should be determining the size of their councils, the boundaries of their councils, the names of their community councils or the council wards and boundaries. That's something that we can look forward to in the new City of Toronto Act, as that comes forward.

The previous government ran on a platform to disallow municipalities from raising taxes at all, without having to hold a referendum. Talk about disrespect. Talk about lack of confidence in those people who are duly elected by the people of the towns, villages and cities of our province.

This government's taking a different approach through this legislation. This government believes in our municipalities. We believe in our municipal leaders. We believe they're accountable to the people who elect them. We believe they're mature levels of government that will make the right decisions for their communities, that will make the decisions that will ensure those communities are well served and can provide services for each and every one of their constituents.

I think my time is running out, Mr. Deputy Whip.

Interjection.

Mr. Duguid: I've got another minute or two? Seeing that, I want to tell you that our province believes in strong municipalities. That's why we'll soon be coming in with a City of Toronto Act. That's why we'll soon be coming in with a new Municipal Act that will respect the needs of municipalities and give them the powers they need to perform the duties they have to perform and to take on some of the serious challenges, and a new approach to the Ontario Municipal Board that will ensure that municipal decisions are much more respected than they were under the previous municipal government. I'm looking forward to these pieces of legislation moving forward. But in order to move forward with the City of Toronto Act, we need to move forward first with undoing some of the wrongs, some of the damage that the previous government did in restricting the province from having the ability to allow municipalities to consider, to look at, alternative sources of revenue. That's going to be important.

We'll be able to judge from the Conservative Party's response to this particular piece of legislation whether in fact they're moving away from the old ways of the Harris-Eves regime and into the new ways being put forward by the McGuinty government. I think this will be a really good test for their caucus. If they want to monkey around with this legislation, they can find lots of ways to say, "We don't support it because of this or because of that." The fact of the matter is, this is a simple piece of legislation. If they're for it, they respect municipalities. If they're against it, then they're obviously buying into the previous government's regime of showing disrespect and a lack of confidence in the municipalities and communities that elect our councils from one end of the province to the next.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Oh, don't stop.

Mr. Duguid: I don't want to stop, but I'm running out of time. I look forward to hearing the comments of others.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I want to thank the minister for his rendition of things that have happened in the province in the last couple of years, and the parliamentary assistant for similar comments. I would just like to point out that very little of what was said had anything to do with the act that we're debating and the purpose of the act that we're talking about. So we look forward to being able to come up and explain what the act is supposed to do, as opposed to the message that the government decided they wanted to get out this afternoon in their presentation. After introducing the act and not giving any information as to what it was supposed to do and how it was going to impact our province, I was hoping we would get that today. Obviously, again, we didn't get it, but hopefully, as the debate carries on, more and more of it will come out.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I listened to the two debaters here today. They talk about their bill and they talk about, "Which side are you on?" Well, I have to tell you, I am firmly on the side of the residents of the city of Toronto. I am firmly in—

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: No, you're not.

Mr. Prue: Oh, yes, absolutely. All of the twisting of my words that you try so unsuccessfully to do every day is for naught, because the people of Toronto know exactly where I stand on this bill and they know where I stand in support of them. I am in support of them to build a better city, in fact, to take the city back.

The city of Toronto was once a great city, where people came from all over the world to study its governance, how it worked, how successful it was, and how it had sufficient funds and was able to operate. Those same people who used to travel everywhere to watch the council meetings at Metro Hall, at the city of Toronto, in the borough of East York and the other municipalities, don't come any more. They don't come to see the city that works; they come now to find out how it has failed, and it has failed in many places. It has failed because of the amalgamation. It has failed because of the down-loading. It has failed because of the inability of the tax protection act for them to have raised any funds. It has failed for a whole variety of reasons that need to be addressed.

What is before this bill? This bill is a very small component of what might work for the city of Toronto, and in fact it might work for some municipalities, but it comes with a very big price, and in my hour I'm going to talk about the very big price that is going to have to be paid by the council of the city of Toronto, and any council that chooses to raise taxes. There is a certain feeling of the taxpayer out there who doesn't understand

why the city doesn't have enough money from the property tax, the \$17 billion that is taken. What they will be surprised to know is that the province gets most of that money, and I'm going to be talking about that too, because that's the real honesty of what's going on around here.

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Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I have to compliment the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the government for finally recognizing and taking action on something very important. It's something very simple that the city of Toronto and the municipalities have been asking for for a long time. It has come finally to this minister and this government to say, "Yes, it's about time we recognize some of the urgent necessities and recognize the power that the cities and municipalities have been asking for." Those things are so simple sometimes, and it takes so long to make and obtain changes, that it's only right the municipalities have the authority, the flexibility, the tools to conduct their daily business, so that they don't have to come to the province, to the provincial government, for the various changes that they require and want to make.

The bill allows the power to conduct their business on a regular basis, on a daily basis. How will they conduct their business? They will be judged by their own people in the various municipalities. In Toronto, for example, I remember that since 1978 we've been asking for some new powers and changes so that we don't have to run to the provincial government to change a stoplight, to change a stop sign, to introduce the simplest legislation.

This will help municipalities. It will give them the flexibility to conduct their business. I'm sure that they will do it, that they will conduct themselves in a very responsible way. If they don't, with all due respect to my colleagues on the other side, there is an election every three or four years and they will be responsible to the people.

At the same time, it has taken this government to take action and give the municipalities the power they require. I complement the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and this government for acting today.

Mr. Marchese: I have to tell you, Minister, you don't have any cheerleaders here on this side. I know you have a whole lot of cheerleaders on this side and that side, but not many here. I'll tell you very clearly that this has nothing to do—don't give me that puzzled, quixotic look, Minister, because, you see, I've been in this place for 15 years and I know the game and that's what tires me out.

When you call it "respect for municipalities," it reminds me of the Tories who used to name their bills so very interestingly. You're copying them. You and I used to attack them when, for example, they introduced the Tenant Protection Act. Do you recall? New Democrats attacked it. David Caplan used to attack the Tories when they did that. I excoriated the Tories each and every time they introduced a bill that belied the title of the bill. So I say, be wary of the title of the bill. There is no respect for municipalities.

I'll tell you what this is about. The provincial government doesn't want to tax any more, because they already had to break a promise to be able to do that. They don't want to break the promise again. They have broken that promise once by introducing the health tax and they don't want to do it again. But they know the municipalities need the money, so they say, "Ah, we know how to help them. We're going to give them the power to be able to tax the citizens of Toronto, and we'll call that," like the member from York West said, "respect for the city of Toronto, their right to take on this responsibility, to be able to tax the citizens of Ontario in whatever way they want to be able to raise the money that the provincial government refuses to do on its own." That's what this bill is all about—not respect for the cities; I've got to tell you that. But we'll have plenty of time to be able to talk to that.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for a response.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Let me just say at the outset how disappointed I am at the two municipal leaders who are my critics both in the Conservative Party and in the New Democratic Party—two members whom I have some admiration for, because I know they've been there at the municipal scene—for the attitude that they have taken. For the member for East York—

Mr. Marchese: Trinity—Spadina.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: No, no; East York—to say that the city of Toronto was once a great city, well, I say it is still a great city. For him to say, "It has failed because of the Taxpayer Protection Act"—that's exactly what we're trying to do. We're trying to get rid of the Taxpayer Protection Act so it doesn't stand in the way of the city of Toronto being a great city and being able to develop and determine the direction that it wants to take. Everybody is onside on that one—everybody, from the mayor's own committees to the joint task force, to the mayor himself, to AMO. They all feel that municipalities need greater abilities to basically run their own affairs, and that's exactly what we're doing with this bill.

Let me just address the issue for the member from Oxford. May I just remind him that it was his government that brought in the Taxpayer Protection Act. What did they do within a year of that? They violated that act by voting against it, and some of these members are still here. This is right from the record. Who voted against that at the time? Who voted against the Taxpayer Protection Act in 2002? Ted Arnott, John Baird, Toby Barrett, Ted Chudleigh, Garfield Dunlop, Ernie Hardeman, Tim Hudak, Cameron Jackson, Frank Klees, Julia Munro, Bill Murdoch, John O'Toole, Robert Runciman, Norman Sterling, Joe Tascona and Elizabeth Witmer.

This bill is good for municipalities.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Hardeman: I'm happy to rise and speak to Bill 37, a bill entitled the total disrespect for taxpayers act, 2005. Isn't that what you called it? Oh, no; that was my interpretation of what the bill is, rather than the nice name that was given to it.

I mentioned it a couple of moments ago, and I think it's so important: All the discussion so far seems to be centring around a City of Toronto Act that is yet to be introduced. What we're asking to be debated today is An Act to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, in relation to municipalities. I think it's important that we all understand that the Taxpayer Protection Act does not apply to municipalities anywhere in the act. The act applies only to the provincial government and its ability to raise taxes.

There is one section, and that's what the government is now trying to amend. I think that's really what bothers me. We call it Respect for Municipalities, and so we're somehow trying to tell the municipalities that if we introduce the City of Toronto Act, the municipalities would be responsible for holding a referendum. Nothing could be further from the truth. The referendum is something that the government must do, because whether they actually raise the taxes themselves or whether they allow municipalities to raise the taxes, it's the same tax increase.

It's also so important that we need to discuss it quickly: This isn't really about the City of Toronto Act; it's about respect, and about the respect, as a population, the people in my community can or should have for the Premier of the province. Obviously, this act shows that none of it, no respect, is warranted. I feel kind of bad about that because I think all people of Ontario should be able to respect their Premier. But I don't know how you can do that when, on September 11, 2003, prior to the election, the Premier signed a pledge with the federation of taxpayers. He had said he was not going to lower taxes, but he was also not going to raise taxes, and, "If you don't believe me, I'll sign a pledge."

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John Williamson, the federal director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation in Ottawa, was very positive about that. You will notice that the federation is very positive about the government's commitment to the taxpayers of Ontario, and I quote: "This is a bold new era in Ontario politics where political parties are bound by law to make voters aware of the total cost and relevant tax rate changes underlying their tax proposals in their respective political platforms."

Of course, the law was that if he was going to increase taxes after the election, he would have to put forward what he was going to do. So he said, "No, no, we will not be doing that. I am willing to sign the pledge to say that I will not increase taxes."

The CTF federal director, Walter Robinson: "With voter awareness of the tax implications in both major party platforms, an informed ballot can now be truly cast on October 2."

From that, I'm to assume that the people of Ontario now have the ability to choose between the parties who are running for office, with being able to go to bed and sleep soundly, that neither one of them will raise taxes—both of the two parties signed, and the third party didn't sign. Obviously people could make the choice that they

don't want to vote for the third party because it might raise taxes, but they can be assured that, regardless of whether it's the present government or the opposition, taxes will not go up, because they pledged that.

"Our pledge is very simple. It is a clear statement that does not give lawmakers any wiggle-room," noted Williamson. "By signing our pledge, the candidates are looking into the whites of our eyes and telling us that we can trust their tax and spending promises."

Well, I guess it didn't work. I guess we can't believe the Premier when he signs the Taxpayer Protection Act. First of all, of course, immediately upon the first budget, when we received the largest tax increase in Ontario history, they changed the act to accommodate that. Because of the circumstances they said they found, they changed the act to cover that off.

What really bothers me now is that the circumstances as they relate to the relationship between the province and the municipalities have not been explained: that it is now different than it was when the Premier signed the taxpayer pledge. If there was a need—and the minister and the parliamentary assistant both mentioned that the municipalities have been asking for this. I've been around for some time, and they were asking for it for a long time. They were asking for more taxing authority on the day before and the day after the Premier signed the pledge. So when the Premier signed the pledge, he knew this section was in the bill, and he said, "I will, if elected, adhere to it."

Then, lo and behold, that's not the case. We're not going to adhere to it. We introduce a bill that says, "I didn't like the way the polling numbers went when we did it the other way, where we just changed it so we could increase taxes. Why don't we see if we can download the taxation ability to municipalities," because that's what this bill gives the ability to do: They no longer have to hold a referendum to download the ability to raise taxes.

I don't believe that there's a municipal person in this province who really wants to have new taxes so they can charge their citizens more. I think they want to have the ability to provide adequate services in the areas that they are responsible for with the tax base and the tax levels that they presently have.

The minister mentioned some of the things that this government has done with municipalities. One was that they have transferred some of the gas tax to municipalities to help pay for public transit. This bill was not required to do that, because providing that they're just transferring the money that they already have in their tax base, they can transfer that to municipalities to use for the services that are required. This is just, in my opinion, a way in which they will not have to take responsibility for the taxation, and they will also be able to say, "Well, municipalities, look what we've done for you." If this was an issue between the provincial and federal government, we'd call it transferring tax points: We lower our taxes a little bit because we have an election coming, and then you can raise up the same. The people won't notice that the taxes have gone up or down, and the people will

be happy, because we wouldn't want the taxation to go up.

But what's really important here is not whether the issue of transferring the power to municipalities is right or wrong, or whether it should be provincial money or municipal money. What is really important here is that it requires the consent of the people. That's what this bill is all about. It isn't about whether the transfer should or shouldn't be done; it's about whether the people should have a say on that issue. That's what the whole Taxpayer Protection Act is about, that if you want to increase taxes, you must ask the people whether they believe you should increase taxes or whether you are asked to deliver the service in a different way. Obviously, they don't want to do that. They want to pass a bill so we don't have to ask the people.

But what's worse is the way it is being done and the way it's being explained. I'm having a little trouble. We've heard a lot about how they're going to introduce a new City of Toronto Act. The City of Toronto Act, of course, is looking to give more powers to the city. The province had this vision that they would like the city to be governed differently. But what's really important is that the city says that we have too many services and too many costs that don't relate to property taxes. When times are good—let's go the other way. When times are bad, that's not the time to raise property taxes, but that is the time when social services costs go up the most. So the city says, "We can't deal with that with the present tax structure." But the province has other alternatives to solve that problem about municipalities, to have a look and to redo, if I might say it, the Who Does What process that was done a number of years ago as to which level of government should provide which service and how the relationship—

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): They didn't take their advice.

Mr. Hardeman: No, exactly. But if—

Interjection.

Mr. Hardeman: If the province and the city have a problem with that arrangement, that's what we should look at, and not just all of a sudden tell the people of Ontario, "We're going to increase your taxes. Well, we're not going to, because we said we wouldn't, but we're going to tell municipalities to increase the taxes so they can pay for those services." I don't believe that's the appropriate way to deal with it.

It's cloaked in even more mystery. Yesterday, I asked the Premier a simple question, but, as is normal in this place, it wasn't a very simple answer. The answer was nowhere. It really wasn't based on the question; it didn't answer the question. The question was, "Can you tell the taxpayers of this province what types of new taxes you are going to allow" municipalities to subject their constituents to? "For example, are taxpayers going to be subjected to a new sales tax, poll tax or income tax? Premier, is this new increase in taxes that municipalities can collect for the province going to include all municipi-

palities" at the same time, or are you going to do it just with the City of Toronto Act?

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I understand that the government tries hard not to answer a simple question, but the Premier certainly did a job on this one. I'll quote his answer, and when I'm finished it will clearly show that the simple question of what the taxpayers are going to be hit with in the way of new taxes wasn't answered. The other part of his comment, that what they intend to do is respect municipalities, will be dealt with shortly. Well, I thought this act was about respecting municipalities. We're not going to deal with it shortly.

This is Mr. McGuinty answering the question: "I'll tell you what inspires and motivates the line of questioning the party opposite is pursuing at this point in time. The long and the short of it is that they don't believe they can trust the people who live in Ontario municipalities and that they cannot trust their duly elected officials. What we intend to do on this side of the House is turn this around and respect Ontario municipalities and give them the credence they are due. They sow division; they sow discord." Then it goes on that they are going to sow respect with municipalities.

I don't see anywhere in there where there is respect for municipalities by telling them, "There is no more assistance coming from the province, and incidentally, if you think you can get away with it, you can tax your citizens more to help pay for the services we are downloading."

I think it's even more important—I wasn't going to do this—to get into the issue of whether it applies to the province, and since it's a local issue and we don't know the types of taxes, don't know what is going to be taxed, I find it very difficult to figure out how you are going to charge the tax in Toronto and not in Mississauga. If this authority that's going to come in the City of Toronto Act applies only to the city of Toronto, I think we're going to have a little difficulty. Some of us, mostly on the government side, are going to hear, I presume, from the mayor of Mississauga, who says that they too deserve some respect and that they too should have the right to do what Toronto can do.

The other thing is that the other day a staff report came out on the future of the city of Toronto. I think it's to kind of lay the groundwork for the bill that's coming on Toronto. It listed the potential taxes that might be available. But then, when they were going through, they were collectively saying, "This one won't work very well, and this one won't work very well, and this one—no, we can't all agree that that would be a good one." The ones that everybody at least seemed to be able to agree on were alcohol and cigarettes. Of course, it's not new to anyone in this place, and I don't expect it's new to anyone in Ontario, that when you are going to increase taxes, have new taxes, they're always the ones looked at first as to whether they can get enough money out of that to meet their needs.

If this is not a universal issue across Ontario and we put it back at the local level, I was wondering how it

would work when you go to an eating establishment, and they have decided to put a tax on the drink that you are going to have with dinner. How long would the little shop on the Toronto side of the border stay in business if they have to pay tax on the one side, but they don't have to pay tax on the other side, unless we're building walls to keep people in so they can't go and have dinner outside the riding?

Similarly with cigarettes, I know the government's policy is to have a smoke-free Ontario and not sell cigarettes any more, but in the time it takes to get to their stated goal, I expect the sales of higher taxed cigarettes in Toronto are going to go down in the same proportion as sales in the 905 area are going to go up, where the taxes on it are much lower. People will not frequent stores that are charging considerably more taxes. The reason I bring that up is that I think it's so important that these taxes that are presently at the provincial level—there's a reason for that, so they are universal across the province.

We've had in municipal affairs, and in the association between the provincial government and municipal government, this problem with economic development. I digress a little on this bill, but the issue of bonusing: Municipalities can do things, and in some areas of the country—not in Ontario, but in some areas of the country—they can pay people to come and build their development and their investment in their community. Of course, they then end up with a bidding war. At the end of the day, it benefits the individuals who are doing the investing, but it does not benefit the municipalities who are buying their investment to come here, as opposed to providing the types of services and needs to meet the investment there.

The reason it's not allowed under the Municipal Act is because the province has always concluded that they didn't want municipalities bidding against one another to get the industry. If you don't do that, and you bid based on the services in the community you have, then it will even out and everyone will get their fair share. In the end, all it does is that there is no great investment on anyone's part. The same investment still comes into our province. Providing that the provincial environment is conducive to new investment, then they will come to the province and will go to where it's best suited for them. So it was decided that we won't have that.

When you start having a regime where the present province-wide taxes are going to be levied at the local level, we have this problem with the borders. The chair of the TTC in Toronto—I just read it in the paper this morning as I was having breakfast—was suggesting that the first thing they wanted to look at, when they got this ready to go, was a \$5 premium on licence plates on cars. I expect we would then, fairly soon, if licence plates in Toronto are dearer than they are just on the other side, have a lot of borders at renewal time. We get the plates and we go to Toronto every day, but we don't live there. Of course, no one would come into the city to make purchases of things that are artificially higher in Toronto than they are in the rest of the province.

I think it's also important that in the paper that came with—the word will come to me.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Compendium.

Mr. Hardeman: Thank you, Mr. Phillips. It said that this bill gives the municipal government absolutely no new taxing powers; it only gives them more fiscal tools to deal with their present taxing structure. Remember, as I said when I started the presentation, there are no rules based on referendums for municipalities to raise their present taxes. The only restriction that exists on everything that municipalities presently have the authority to tax, their licence fees, is that the licensing regime must somewhat relate to the cost of administering that licensing regime, but the taxes are strictly their choice. What we're really talking about, again, are only the new powers they would get from the province so that they could charge what they presently can't charge. The province can't transfer those without asking whether the people want that transfer to take place. That's what I understand this bill is supposed to do.

What I think is most important, though, is not the issue of the bill, it's the issue of the commitment of the government, and the fact that if there's a law there and you decide you don't want to obey it, then you just change it. To me, if governments can do that, do we not give that right to the people too? If I just can't live within the law, why don't I get somebody to change the law so I can live within it? To me, whether you're a government or anyone else, it is wrong and that's why I can't support this bill. It really goes against the principle of governments living by the rules that they've made.

1650

Furthermore, I wouldn't use the word, but if this law is passed and the taxing authority is passed to municipalities based on the fact that the province does not have to hold a referendum, then I have to accept that the pictures in the magazine with the Premier on the cover signing the taxpayers federation pledge that were just shown by the member a few seats over—that's the one he has over there. That's not a prop; it's actually just a magazine that I'm sure the member from the New Democrats was reading with great interest. He's likely a regular subscriber to the magazine.

That picture, to me, tells the story. The Premier signed that pledge. The previous time, when they broke the Taxpayer Protection Act by changing it to meet their budgetary requirements within the province, I think someone could—not me—say that was understandable because we found something different than we thought existed at the time we signed the pledge. But there is nothing different in what they're proposing to do. The need to do that then, whether it was there or not, was exactly the same as the need to do it now. The Premier still saw fit to sign that pledge and say, "Believe me, I know what I'm doing. I will not raise your taxes without asking you first."

We can talk about referendums and the cost and so forth. Everyone agreed that those were the rules—he

signed it—that if this was going to happen, it would not happen in the province of Ontario. If there was a Liberal government, it would not happen unless the people were asked first. I don't know how you can just turn around and say, "Oh no, no, no," unless, of course, we don't want to do that. Then we'll have a bill called respect for taxpayers and we'll carry on and do it anyway, because now we're no longer breaking the law because the law has been changed." I just don't know how one can accept that.

The other thing I think is important is that this isn't the first time—and the minister spoke at length about all the reasons why this was a good title for the bill: respect for municipalities. But there are so many things they've done that show no respect at all. We can go on for some time about things like the greenbelt legislation. Much debate has taken place in this chamber about the greenbelt legislation, whether the lines were properly drawn. I've talked to some people in recent weeks who still have grave concerns about where the line was, where it is and how it got from one place to the other without any further study or any reason. Somebody had their farm chopped on one side or right down the middle, and when he said, "Our farm is the same all over. Why wouldn't the line leave our farm out?" they said, "You're right, the farm should be all in one place; we'll put it all in," and things like that.

The reason I bring up things like that has to do, again, with respect for municipalities, which the government is trying to portray here, and the fact that they give no consideration to what was already there, what people's plans were. The municipalities had the authority to administer the Planning Act, and all of a sudden, we have the province coming in and saying, "No. We have what we think is in the best interests of all the people of the province. This is what we're going to do." I don't know whether that's—well, I know that in my opinion it's wrong, but that's not my issue now. The issue was, we were talking about respect for municipalities. What kind of respect was it when they had that authority and they were administering it as they thought it should be, and without any questions, without any advance notice, they said, "No. This is where the line is going. This is what's going to happen in that area?"

As I come from the great riding of Oxford every day, I come upon a certain area, and I can't tell you exactly where it is, but there is this nice sign that says, "You are entering the greenbelt." It has a sticker with the province of Ontario emblem on it—I can't tell you what else is on it—and then I'm reminded of the ad I keep hearing on the radio that's also put on by the greenbelt. Incidentally, I've been travelling on that piece of road since 1995 almost on a daily basis, and except for the sign, I've seen no change. It's the same area. The same functions that were there before are still ongoing. Every farm is still farming, every factory is still building—everything is still exactly the same. Then I'm thinking of this ad; someone brought it up to me, so I listen very intently to it.

The ad starts off with, "Daddy, where does water come from?" "Well, it comes out of a tap." "Yes, but before it gets to the tap?" And Dad says, "I don't know." Then this background noise comes on—or the announcer comes on and announces that we have this greenbelt.

When the person was mentioning it, I said, "I don't know what it really does." What is it that the greenbelt is doing differently from 25 years ago that would prompt this ad? What is it that's available there now that wasn't there 25 years ago that would necessitate the need for me to know where it starts and where it finishes as I'm driving down the road? Of course, after it was all said and done, it turns out that the most important part of the ad was on the sign too, in the corner: "The province of Ontario: Look at the wonderful things we do for you." It's nice, but that's what the now-government side used to call government advertising. Of course, we all know that they funnelled the money through the Greenbelt Foundation in order to do this advertising.

The reason I bring all that up first of all is the disrespect for the taxpayers, but second is the fact that we're talking about funnelling money. In my way of thinking, what we're doing with this bill is we're funnelling tax increases. At the end of the day, the tax increases that will be incurred through municipalities will be used to fund the services that the province and the municipalities jointly sponsor, and they will be increasing the taxes in order to pay for them. They could have done it without this bill, the same way they did last time with the budget when they needed more money; they could have just increased the taxes, changed the Taxpayer Protection Act one more time—

Interjections.

Mr. Hardeman: Is this the Speaker's conversation or mine?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Hardeman, you still have the floor.

Mr. Hardeman: Speaker, I say it with absolutely no disrespect. I thought maybe there was something I was doing wrong when you were checking with the other side. I meant no disrespect at all. I just noticed that there were two of us speaking at the same time.

The Acting Speaker: We're just straightening out the business of the day, so you can continue. You have the floor.

Mr. Hardeman: Thank you very much. I've lost my place, Mr. Speaker.

1700

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Start over.

Mr. Hardeman: I don't really want to start over, even though the government members would love that I did, because I think they too realize the problem with the impression that we cannot believe and trust our Premier. That is what has happened here; there is no doubt about it. His word is not his bond. In fact, his words are not his

principles. In fact, his word is nothing at all, because he promised not to do this.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): He keeps breaking his taxpayers' pledge. He said, "I will not raise your taxes."

Mr. Hardeman: Exactly. In fact, after we went through this the first time, where the government decided not to obey the law and changed the law, the taxpayers' federation said, "This is wrong. We're going to take them to court." They didn't win. The government said, "Oh, boy, isn't that wonderful? The taxpayers' federation took us to court, and we told them, 'You couldn't hold us to our word because we're government.'" The courts agreed. The courts didn't say that what the government had done was right; they just said they had the right to do it. I think that's what is so wrong with this. Yes, they can change the law and allow taxes to increase—but is that right? I don't think so.

I remember, shortly after I was elected in 1995—and I'd spent 14 years as a municipal politician first, but you didn't have this problem with partisanship in politics. Anyway, I had just been elected in 1995. I met this individual on the street, who, to be honest, shared some different views than I did. One would not have suspected that he might have voted for me; in fact, he proceeded to tell me that. He said, "Now that you're elected, even though we didn't vote for you, you do have to represent all the people." I said, "Well, sir, you are right, but remember, that means representing your interests but not necessarily implementing everything that you want." He said, "Why not?" I said, "I can't do more than what I promised to do. So if I promised one person during the election that this is what I stood for, this is what I'm going to do, then just because I'm now your representative too, and your view is totally opposite to that individual who did support me, I can't change what I said. I do what I said I was going to do, and I'm committed to that. So yes, you have to remember that I represent you all, but you also have to remember that the views of the other people won."

In this case, I think the Premier is saying, "We're going to tell them, 'This is what we'll do,'" and then when he was elected—I'm sure there were people, but I can't say how many, who voted for the Premier, who said, "I don't know exactly how I want to vote because I don't want tax increases, but I don't like Ernie Hardeman either." So they're kind of stuck. All of a sudden when the Premier says, "I'm going to sign the pledge that there'll be no tax increases," they may very well have decided that they'd go the other way, and said, "That was the only thing I was worried about. I wasn't sure I could believe him when he said, 'I will not raise your taxes,' but now he's signed the pledge. He's cured. No more tax-and-spend Liberal. He's not going to increase taxes." My gosh, he's had a relapse. He is going to tax and spend and tax and spend. When he hit the roadblock where it says, "There's a law that says I can't do it," then "I'll change the law so I can do it. Not only that, I won't take the penalty for it because I'm going to blame municipalities."

The other thing that is a question that I'd like answered by the government side is the issue of implementation of provincial taxes that municipalities are going to charge. There is some example of it with the gas tax, where they said, "We're going to give municipalities two cents"—I think it's at a cent and a half now and it's going up to two cents—"a percentage or a part of the gas tax." But in reality, they don't give municipalities part of the gas tax. What they do is they calculate how much gas tax they have and then they decide how much of it they're going to send to municipalities in grant form, in some form of formula. Generally, it's based on population. I think the first announcement was based on the transit needs in each municipality. But it had absolutely nothing to do with the gas that was pumped and the municipality in which it was pumped. So when I went to my gas station in Salford, the gas they were pumping—part of that could very well have been going to Toronto because there was no connection between the gas tax and the municipality the money was going to.

We haven't seen the City of Toronto Act, so I have no idea what it's going to say, but if that's the approach—that it's just a grant—then again, I see absolutely no purpose for this act or that part of the City of Toronto Act that would allow them to tax. Why would they not just send a letter in their memorandum of understanding with the municipality and put in there, "Once a year, you can call us and tell us what taxes you want and we will just levy them for you and send them to you"?

It's going to be a bit of a problem if you're trying to keep the taxes in one municipality and not the other. But if it's going to be the same across the province, once it was decided that they were going to have two cents of the gas tax going to municipalities, and it's going to them all, then it became a simple calculation. No new structure needs to be put in place. There's no argument about which municipality is which. That, to me, would make much more sense than trying to set up a new tax collection structure for any new taxes that are separate from the provincial tax structure and also confined to just one municipality. So if the city of Toronto, as the head of the TTC—

Mr. Berardinetti: Howard Moscoe.

Mr. Hardeman: My good friend Howard, yes. I didn't want to get too personal, but if he's right and he wants \$5 for every licence plate sold in Toronto, I want to know whether the city of Toronto is going to be expected to set up a licence office or a person in our licence office to collect the \$5, or whether the provincial government is just going to charge \$5 more for a plate in Toronto. If that's the case, again, the money goes to the provincial treasury and they're going to send it back to Toronto. It would make much more sense to have the province show a little respect for municipalities, sit down at the table with them and say, "One of the things you need is more revenue. Why don't we agree that we're going to put \$5 on licence plates to help municipalities to pay for roads? This is how much it would be, and here you go." If that was the case, the Premier again would

have to break the rule about increasing taxes. But I'm not even sure it would be covered in the act any more, because it would seem to me that normal inflation could justify going \$5 on the licence plate. But that's irrelevant. They could do that across the province. We would then have all municipalities looked after and not have this bill here before us, and not make the Premier untrustworthy. That's my biggest concern. His reputation is going downhill fast. I'm a member of this Legislature, so when I speak of the Premier, he's our Premier too. I think his reputation with these types of bills is going downhill fast, and I just don't think that's the right thing to do.

1710

I want to talk a little on respect for municipalities. I've had the opportunity in the last couple of weeks of sitting on the committee that's reviewing the OMERS pension bill. This may come much closer to being a municipal issue than the bill we're talking about here. The OMERS pension is the pension plan that all municipal employees are members of, so it covers all municipal pensions. Presently the OMERS pension is run by the province of Ontario. They have a board set up and the province appoints the members of the board and they run the pension.

There was some discussion about devolution of the pension plan to municipalities so that labour and management would together run their own pension plan. There would no longer be a third party running the plan. There had been that discussion for quite a while back and, all of a sudden, we have this bill come forward that has the devolution in it, and one is supposed to get into the debate about this bill, that because of the devolution of the pension plan, we have more local control and more respect for the people who are involved in the plan.

As we got to public hearings, we had presenters coming in, and the original presenters—now, to give credit where credit is due, the minister was very good in putting the bill out for public hearings after first reading. Having done the public presentations, we want to assure you that we will be asking the minister to also take it back out after second reading. The parliamentary assistant is just coming in. I'm just talking about the OMERS pension hearings. But the original presenters—

Interjection.

Mr. Hardeman: No. I tied it in, so it's OK.

What was interesting was that of the original presenters, there was no one—well, that might not be accurate, because I wasn't there all the time. There were very few people, if any, who came in and said, "We like the bill." There are some changes in the bill for some of the municipal workers that are liked by those municipal workers, and I'm not arguing, but what I really wanted to talk about was the respect for municipalities. There was no one, as individual municipalities or as AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, that came in and supported the bill. In fact, they came in with numbers that were just astonishing to me of how much that bill was going to cost them as municipalities.

When I start debating this bill, I say maybe this is part of the government's solution: "We'll just pass this bill,

we'll give them more taxing powers, and then they'll be happy because they can take the money from the people instead of from us." I don't know that, but I worry about that.

What I was trying to say is that there didn't seem to be any respect for municipalities in this whole process. We had four days of hearings, and I'm not exaggerating when I say that we didn't hear any more than 20% to 25% of those people who wanted to be heard, but that was all the days we had set up for hearings. We asked for more hearings, as the Conservative Party, but I'm not sure it would have made any difference because we were not getting positive comments anyway. I thought it was just a matter of cutting your losses and saying, "This bill just doesn't work. We've got to change it." Since then, we've started the clause-by-clause and addressed some of the issues. Mind you, it still has an awful long way to go before it gets to where it needs to be, and I'm sure we'll have further debate when it comes back to the House.

The reason I bring it up is that I just can't believe the minister would have the nerve—I think that's the right way to say it; I may be putting it a little too bluntly—to call what this bill is "respect for municipalities." First of all, it has nothing to do with municipalities at all. Mr. Speaker, I'm not asking you to rule on it, but I wonder why it's a municipal bill at all, because the only thing this bill does is change a clause in the Taxpayer Protection Act, which is under the purview of the Minister of Finance.

So here we have the Minister of Municipal Affairs changing a bill that is under the purview of the Minister of Finance, and so far—I almost got it yesterday when I asked the Premier—I don't even know whether the Minister of Finance supports this. Maybe we should have him come in and ask him, to see whether he actually does, because it's not really a municipal affairs bill. It deals with the part of the Taxpayer Protection Act that says that when the government decides to divulge some of its authority to someone else, it must hold a referendum first; that's what the Taxpayer Protection Act says.

Now, all of a sudden, we have a municipal thing—I presume it was an oversight that they put it on to the Minister of Municipal affairs. It was likely thought of a few hours before they started looking at introducing the City of Toronto Act, and they realized they couldn't introduce the City of Toronto Act until this act was before us, because that's the law. If it hasn't been changed, then obviously, you have to obey it. Well, that's not a given, either.

I think the whole thing comes down to this: I have absolutely no idea what the title of the bill has to do with the contents of the bill. Recognizing that there's supposed to be a connection between a title and the content, since the content doesn't deal with municipalities, it's an inappropriate title—but to me, it's even worse than that, it's a deceitful title.

Is it legal to say that, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm going to find out. I would like a ruling on whether or not that verbiage is allowed in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): In the opinion of the Speaker, the word "deceitful" is not appropriate. It should be withdrawn.

Mr. Hardeman: Then I certainly withdraw it. I would then say that the title is less than forthright in dealing with the content of the bill.

Having said that, I think that's really the point I wanted to make. It took me a little while to get there, but I think it's inappropriate to intentionally prepare a bill—it's been quite evident from the comments opposite, including the questions to the Premier yesterday, that this is being done when they realized that when they were going to introduce the City of Toronto Act, they had to do this. It's wrong that when a government realizes they're close to the edge of legality, they just change the law so they can get away with what it is they are doing. That's wrong. At the end of the day, the Premier said he wouldn't do this, and I think he's just decided to give up.

I think it's important to have a quote from the Taxpayer, and Mr. Speaker, this is from before you were elevated to the Chair; obviously, you were reading their magazine. This is one of the quotes: "The Taxpayer Protection Act prohibits the government from raising certain taxes or imposing new ones without public approval"—the words "public approval" are important—"either through an election or referendum. Yet in 2004, the Liberals imposed the health tax without any public mandate whatsoever. Even the government's pre-budget consultations made no mention of the tax. Worse yet, Mr. McGuinty had spent the entire fall 2003 election trumpeting his message of, 'I won't lower your taxes, but I won't raise them, either.' The Liberal leader then took this pledge a step further, by signing the CTF taxpayer protection promise on September 11, 2003, undertaking not to raise taxes or run deficits and to respect the TPA," the Taxpayer Protection Act.

1720

I will quote another passage from the same news release:

"If existing taxpayer protection laws do not protect taxpayers, then they need to be strengthened. If politicians cannot be held accountable for their promises, then the public need other means to hold them to account. For if politicians can get away with"—and I will leave this word out because it's an inappropriate word in this Legislature—"to win elections, then we will only end up being told more"—another word I can't repeat. "Let's remind our elected officials that taxpayers are the ones who underwrite government, and not the other way around."

With that, I'll sit down. Thank you very much for the time, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Prue: I listened intently there for what was most of an hour of a speech. Although it did stray from time to

time into many other areas, it's quite clear that the member feels very passionately about this bill.

He strayed a couple of times and he questioned whether or not this is going to be the law in municipalities other than the city of Toronto. I am not the proponent of this bill. I am not the one putting it forward, but it seems to me quite clear that this refers to all municipalities. I cannot find anywhere in here that it refers to the city of Toronto and the city of Toronto alone.

I can understand his confusion, though, because the two leadoff speakers for the government both spoke about how it was going to affect the city of Toronto. In fact, I think that this bill, as it is constituted and written out—and I definitely will be speaking to it—should apply to every single municipality, every town, every village, every unincorporated area. If one city or one group of cities has the right to tax and has the obligation of the Taxpayer Protection Act removed from them, then surely all of them should. I think this has been one of the failures of the government in negotiating with the city of Toronto for the City of Toronto Act. I am not opposed to the act; I have not even seen the act yet. I am generally in favour of cities having more powers. But when you leave out a city like Ottawa, when you leave out a city like Hamilton or Mississauga or the larger municipalities of this province, which have many of the same infrastructures, many of the same governance models, have mayors and councils and lawyers and planners and all of the things necessary to do a good job, then I think you actually belittle them. You have an obligation to include them. I'm looking forward, when the City of Toronto Act comes, to other municipalities enjoying the same powers.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): J'ai porté très attention aux commentaires apportés par le membre d'Oxford. Il a mentionné que très peu de gens étaient en faveur de ce projet de loi. Laissez-moi vous dire que je croyais que le gouvernement conservateur du temps avait reconnu leur erreur, puisque durant la conférence d'AMO en 2003, je me rappelle—j'étais présent, et puis j'ai vu toutes les municipalités très, très furieuses concernant cette loi qui avait été mise en place par la ministre du temps, Janet Ecker, qui disait, « Laissez-nous contrôler et administrer nos municipalités. »

Depuis que cette loi a été mise en place, nous reconnaissons, nous voyons que les municipalités sont en grosses difficultés : on n'avait plus d'argent pour améliorer nos routes, plus d'argent pour apporter des améliorations à nos infrastructures telles que les égouts, puisque nous étions limités à une augmentation de taxes équivalente à l'augmentation du coût de la vie.

Aujourd'hui, nous mettons en place une loi qui rend service à toutes les municipalités. Les citoyens qui croient que l'augmentation de taxes est trop élevée, il y a une décision à prendre à tous les trois ans : une élection. Ils sont élus par le peuple; donc, ils sont élus par le peuple pour pouvoir contrôler et administrer les municipalités.

On doit se rappeler qu'en 2002, c'était la ministre du temps, Janet Ecker, qui avait apporté un changement à la

loi, la loi qui a été passée le 27 juin 2002 qui enlevait complètement les responsabilités de contrôler et administrer les municipalités. Aujourd'hui, notre gouvernement McGuinty dit, « C'est la responsabilité de tous les élus municipaux de contrôler la finance de la municipalité. » Donc, c'est pour ça que je crois qu'il est très important de redonner le pouvoir aux municipalités.

Ms. Scott: It's a pleasure to follow the member from Oxford and his comments on the "no respect for taxpayers" act. This brings back images of Dalton McGuinty signing the taxpayer pledge, "I will not raise your taxes," and then all of a sudden we have the health care tax that's come up. Added to that, it's now the largest tax hike in Ontario history. Average families are paying more than \$2,000 a year in extra taxes. That's money out of their pockets that they could be using to pay the increasing energy costs that are going to be coming.

Is this helping, this giving of authority to municipalities? I know the municipalities in Haliburton-Victoria-Brock have been asking for some more infrastructure dollars, some more COMRIF, which is highly over-applied to, and I appreciate the minister acknowledging our requests for COMRIFs. They're looking to build infrastructure in the municipalities. They didn't once ask me about new taxing abilities.

What is this going to do to the people in Toronto? Well, we don't know, but it's breaking the Taxpayer Protection Act and citizens should be worried. As I said—what is it now?—over 50 broken promises. The McGuinty Liberals say one thing in the campaign, they get people to go and vote for them, and then it's like, "Oops, sorry. We're going to have to break this, so I guess we'll just keep on breaking promises." It gives all of us a bad name, as the member from Oxford has said. He's the Premier of the province of Ontario, so it gives all of our politicians a bad name. But the fact is, we're not protecting the taxpayers who should be protected.

The previous government brought in a Taxpayer Protection Act so that taxpayers would have a voice and a say on whether they wanted their taxes to go up, and what more services they would receive for it. This bill is the start of taking that ability away from them.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I'm pleased to speak in favour of Bill 37, the Respect for Municipalities Act. When we were in opposition, we made it very clear that we felt elected municipal people were equal partners in public decision-making in Ontario. Bill 37 will in fact assist in making that happen.

It isn't proper for the provincial level to dictate to the municipality when and if they can raise taxes. People at the municipal level are elected, just like we are elected at Queen's Park, and surely they can make the best decisions for the people they represent. Municipalities have been asking for that, and this bill will in fact do that. It's also going to do what we promised we were going to do.

I would also like to bring to the attention of the Conservatives that it was their present leader, while he was running for the leadership of their party, who did commit himself and saw merits in allowing municipalities to raise

money if they felt it was the right thing to do for their constituency. Also, in the city of Vaughan and the town of Markham—and I represent part of them—certainly there is support for that to be allowed, in particular from the people involved at the municipal level. Of course, the mayor of Toronto is also on record as wanting that to happen. So it seems that everyone sees merit in not requiring the municipalities to have a referendum before raising taxes.

I believe Bill 37 is doing the right thing by allowing municipalities to manage their finances as they see fit, and therefore I will be happy to support Bill 37.

1730

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr. Hardeman: I just want to quickly mention the comments from the member for Beaches-East York. He will remember that yesterday I asked the Premier about whether this would cover other municipalities, and we were unable to get an answer.

I want to finish up here with a couple of quotes.

Right after the 2005 budget: "Toronto should consider increasing residential property taxes above the already assumed rise of 3% as a way to close its yawning budget shortfall," Ontario's municipal affairs minister urged yesterday. 'There are municipalities in the GTA whose tax hikes for residential properties are much higher than the self-imposed 3% that the mayor (David Miller) put on it.'

"John Gerretsen said in a telephone interview from Kingston, 'I don't think it is the province's role to ensure that a local municipal official meets (his or her) targets or obligations.'"

No respect for municipalities there.

Here in the Toronto Star, September 25, 2004, the parliamentary assistant said, "There are many other areas they could look at for cutbacks than life-saving. They've got to start learning to live within their means. Hopefully, they'll keep at it and be able to come up with something reasonable." That's Brad Duguid, the MPP for Scarborough Centre.

Obviously this new-found respect for municipalities has just come upon them today, when they realized they had to pass this bill to introduce a City of Toronto Act. Going back to the comments from the member for Beaches-East York, I can assure you this is not being done for all the municipalities; this is being proposed today so they can force the city of Toronto to tax their residents without going to a referendum.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: The time now being 25 minutes to 6 o'clock, it means that my speech will have to take place in two parts: the first half, or nearly half, today and the second half on Monday. Before I even get to that, I would like to thank those in the back who have agreed to find someone to sit in the chair for me, as Monday night is my time in the Speaker's chair. So I will be starting today and I will be continuing on Monday night, and then very quickly getting changed and going back into the Speaker's chair.

This is a very scant, very small, very tiny bill. It is one page, as has already been commented, and the explanatory note, in the best jargon of legalese that we often find in these, says:

"Currently, subsection 3(1) of the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 provides that a member of the executive council"—that is, somebody in the cabinet—"shall not include in a bill a provision that gives a person or body (other than the crown) the authority to change a tax rate in a designated tax statute or to levy a new tax unless a referendum is held before the bill is introduced in the assembly and the referendum authorizes the authority to be given to the person or body."

Some are talking as if this is some huge, radical change in the way things have gone on in government in the last 130 years in this province, but it is no change at all. It is in fact a change in the way things have happened since 1999 to the present, but I want to assure the people watching that this is not a radical change that you haven't had before in Ontario. It simply takes the law as it relates to municipalities back before that bleak and black day in 1999 when councils and mayors and elected officials in this province were hamstrung by what can only be considered one of the very worst bills that has ever been propagated in this province.

I remember that time back in 1999. I remember the Tory Taxpayer Protection Act, the much-vaunted act of which we are speaking today, being introduced in this Legislature. At that time, I was no longer the mayor of East York, having been forced out in the amalgamation the previous year, but I was a megacity councillor in the city of Toronto. I was one of those individuals who was representing a new city, which was in considerable trauma, I might add, as a result of a whole lot of things that were going on. But one of those things that happened in 1999 was the Taxpayer Protection Act, which stopped the city of Toronto and, yes, every other municipality in Ontario, every school board and every other public institution from being able to raise the necessary monies they needed to continue the work of the municipalities.

I remember talking to my colleagues in the city of Toronto about this act, and I have to tell you that I don't think, even from those people who professed to be members of the Conservative Party back then, there was any support for doing this. I remember sitting around—some of my colleagues are here beside me today, and I remember talking to them. There was virtually no support in the municipality of Toronto, in the megacity of Toronto, for not allowing politicians who were duly elected to raise the necessary taxes to run their city.

When I was the mayor, we used to go to the mayors' conferences. There were mayors there—one of them is over here again. We used to talk about this kind of thing. After that, there continued to be meetings that I attended on behalf of the city of Toronto with the mayors and local representatives who came together once or so a month in the GTA and talked about this. I remember the discussions that the mayors and the representatives in the GTA had in terms of the Taxpayer Protection Act. They

were not in favour of it relating to their municipalities. They did not think it was a good thing, and they knew that in the end it would cause irreparable harm to their individual towns and cities if they did not have the wherewithal to find the money to pay for expanding services in those locations.

I remember going to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario for its annual meetings in Toronto and once to the meeting of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities that year in Ottawa. The talk was the same in those places from the Ontario representatives: I could hardly find a soul who thought it was a good idea that duly elected members were circumscribed in such an unfair manner.

The city of Toronto in 1999 was in its second year of infancy. It had been created, much against the will of its citizens, into a large, amalgamated megacity. I will tell you that they were reeling under many multiple problems at that time. They were reeling under the downloads that the province had forced upon them—the costs which they did not before that bear and the costs that they were now required to pay. They were reeling under the costs of amalgamation, just like Hamilton, just like Ottawa, just like the city of Kawartha Lakes, just like every other place that was amalgamated in this province.

I remember listening on the TV to Al Leach at the time, who was then the minister. It was done, first and foremost, to save money. This was the argument that went on for days and weeks in this Legislature, how much money it was going to save the taxpayers of the cities of Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa and Kawartha Lakes. After a little while, even Mr. Leach admitted that it wasn't going to save any money. In fact, he was right on that, because it hasn't. The costs of amalgamation in all of those respective cities have been really quite horrendous. The number of people they have had to hire has increased in literally every case. There are more public employees in the city of Toronto today, and in Hamilton and Ottawa today, than there were prior to amalgamation. Even when you combine the former municipalities, the costs have gone up, and the costs of the download have continued to exact a terrible toll.

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We look at what has happened to these municipalities today. We look at what has happened to my city of Toronto, the one I stand up for all the time, in spite of the minister trying to twist my words from time to time and say that I don't support this city. I support this city, quite frankly, with all my heart. I support the people who live here and the contributions they make to this province and to this country. They very much feel they are overtaxed. In fact, we know that the city of Toronto pays out far more in taxes than they get in services from other levels of government. That's probably true of other municipalities as well. I'm hearing Hamilton; I'm hearing Mississauga. That's the reality of what happens. The larger cities pay disproportionate amounts of taxes to the province and to the federal government, and, as Canadians and as Ontarians, we know that we have a responsibility

to do that. Many of the smaller towns and villages of this—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: No, I'm not going to talk about getting rid of polling; you can do that yourself.

Many of the smaller towns and villages cannot actually sustain themselves with taxes and they do require that there be an amount of money that comes from time to time from those that can afford to pay it.

But in terms of the larger cities, and in terms especially of Toronto, we have seen cost overruns. We have seen them in many, many places. The city of Toronto and the population of Toronto have had to pay those cost overruns since amalgamation. We have seen the lack of accountability of the council. It is literally impossible for them to be the watchdogs that we expect them to be, as in fact councils in small municipalities can so readily and so easily do.

If you go to a small town, if you go to a village, if you go to a local council meeting in a smaller place of under 100,000 people, you will see the local councillors and the mayor doing something which you cannot see any more in Toronto or Hamilton or Mississauga. You will see them with an agenda, which is usually quite small, and you will see them go line by line by line, saving and cutting every cent they possibly can for their taxpayers, and doing a remarkable job, as if the money were their own. When you get a city like Toronto, with an \$8-billion budget and an agenda that can run into thousands upon thousands of pages for a meeting, it quite literally is impossible. If you want to know how something like MFP happened, just look at the council agenda and you will know how easily such a thing can happen.

I remember one Thursday night getting the council agenda for the following Monday. It was delivered to my office as a megacity councillor. It was contained in three full binders that I could hardly lift up; it was approximately that thick. I was given it on Thursday night and told, "This is the agenda for Monday. Have a good time reading this on the weekend." I read as much as I possibly could over that weekend. We came back on Monday, and somebody asked a very sensible question—it was all on the computer—"How many words are contained in this agenda?" You know something? There were more words in the agenda that we were expected to read that weekend than were contained in all of the works of the Holy Bible. I would ask any member here if you could go home and read the Holy Bible on the weekend—and remember, it has a plot. The reality is that none of you could read that on the weekend, and in fact none of the councillors of the city of Toronto could read the agenda. Things start to happen when that happens. One of the things that happened in Toronto was MFP. We need to make sure that doesn't continue to happen.

We've also seen in the city of Toronto, and in Ottawa and in the city of Kawartha Lakes, and I think to a lesser extent in Hamilton, but certainly there too, that the citizen involvement—the people who used to come to municipal events—has started to decline quite rapidly. It

has declined rapidly because they have lost their own individual sense of community.

Mr. Marchese: What a loss for civic politics.

Mr. Prue: Yes, it's a loss for civic politics. I can only speak of my own beloved East York to tell you that of the 350 people who used to belong to the boards and committees of that municipality, today there are three, and perhaps only two, who are on the boards and committees of the city of Toronto.

Mr. Marchese: So much for participatory democracy.

Mr. Prue: That's literally what has happened.

We suffered from ballooning deficits, and the cities continue to suffer from ballooning deficits. I looked sadly in the paper yesterday to see that the city of Mississauga is now talking for the first time in its history of a 5.9% increase in the tax rate in order to keep things going. We know the city of Toronto has stated that they are \$500 million in the red going into this budget cycle and are going to need that money from the province.

We also know, unfortunately, about the downloading and how it is affecting literally all of the 450 municipalities in this province.

Interjection: Uploading.

Mr. Prue: I've heard over here from one of my colleagues in the Liberal Party about uploading. That's what I'm going to talk about in just a few minutes, how that is the real thing this government should be doing. If they want to help the municipalities, they need to start thinking about uploading, not giving people additional rights to tax, although I'm not going to oppose that. But what they really need to do is to start to upload.

The cities need the money. There's no question that every single one of them needs more money than they have at present. If they didn't need more money, I'm sure that in Mississauga Hazel McCallion would be the last person on earth to go to her taxpayers and say, "I need another 5.9%." I am sure the city of Toronto wouldn't be going to theirs and saying, "We're going to have to raise it." I'm sure Brampton and Ottawa wouldn't be doing it. But the reality is that all of them, because of downloading and the problems of megacities, because things are getting complex in most of the cities, are having to find the money. What are they doing? They're coming cap in hand.

It is regretful to me as a person who has spent my entire life living in this city, save and except for one year I spent in Ottawa—56 out of 57 years in Toronto—to see the mayor have to come cap in hand, literally begging, to the province each and every year to try to get the money to keep the city functioning in a good way.

But the handouts that are being given are not sufficient for the city to maintain the grandeur. I got chided earlier today by saying that the governance and the way we were studied isn't as great as it once was, and it isn't. Peter Ustinov called Toronto "New York run by the Swiss," and it was just in terms of how everything was connected and run so efficiently. That's what people came to study. They don't do that now. We don't get called "New York run by the Swiss" any more. We may get called a great

multicultural city, but we don't get called a city that performs and spins and runs so brilliantly, as it once did.

This city can be great again. This city can be great with a whole bunch of measures, and I'm going to talk about some of those a little later. But right now, in the 10 minutes or so left today, I want to get to why we're here.

We are here today arguing this bill because this government, this Premier and this party did something very foolish on September 11, 2003. I want someone to tell me you don't think today that what you did on that day was foolish, because on that day a whole bunch of you in this room were sitting with the Premier and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation—

Mr. Marchese: Big smiles.

Mr. Prue: —with great big smiles, gleefully signing a document that I'll bet every single one of you today wishes you had not signed.

Mr. Marchese: And they weren't being forced. They didn't have a gun to his head or anything.

Mr. Prue: No, no. They were doing it for electoral purposes. They were doing it because they thought this was going to get them another half of 1% or 1% of the vote and make sure they got elected.

I tell you, in retrospect, you didn't need that extra half of 1% or 1% of the vote. You didn't need to have Premier Dalton McGuinty on the front page of the Taxpayer. You didn't need to have the now Minister of Health behind him, or the former Speaker, or the environment minister or all of those other people pictured there signing a document that has forced you into this position today. That's why we're here, because you signed a document you should not have done.

At that time, I think the Globe and Mail said it best—

Mr. Duguid: We're amending the legislation.

Mr. Prue: Yes, you're amending that legislation today.

Mr. Duguid: You have to amend it either way.

Mr. Prue: No, no. That's why you're here.

This is what the Globe and Mail said at that time: "So the Liberal leader put his fiscal conservatism in writing. On September 11, under the approving eye of John Williamson, Ontario director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Liberal leader scrawled his name under the [Taxpayer Protection Promise] ... In that one act, he confronted Ontarians' greatest concern about Ontario Liberal governments—the fear of fiscal bungling." October 14, 2003.

That's why you did it, and we know that's why we are standing here today.

Having said that, you have to admit that what you signed was wrong. You have to admit that this is a failed policy. This is not the first time that you've stood in this Legislature and said, "We have to undo this policy." It is in fact the second time you had to stand here and, I would say, eat crow during the time of your first budget, when you instituted what is described even today as an unfair tax for a very laudable and good purpose. It was an unfair tax because you taxed people for their health, the poorer

people many times more than they would have had to have paid in a graduated income tax.

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But having said that, you're standing here again and saying—I wish that this government would do the right thing. I wish this government would renounce that day in September 2003. If you're not going to abide by it, not once, but twice, maybe it is time that you simply say, you're not going to be bound by it and tell the taxpayers federation and those people who believed the promise that you're not going to do it. I think that would be the honourable thing to do.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: If you say it's done—I will listen to the chief government whip—then you should do it. But you cannot sit there and do these little tiny tinkering as you're doing with this act today and maintain credibility. You are either going to abide by that act as you promised and signed, or you're not going to abide by that act. I am telling you, you cannot do it piecemeal on that day, and today, on this day, and some months down the road on another portion and have any credibility at all. You should be doing the honourable thing and saying "We will not be bound."

Having said that, I'd like to go on to the next portion of this, and that is to talk about this being a brilliant policy, I would think, of obfuscation. This is a brilliant policy of allowing—

Interjection: A brilliant policy.

Mr. Prue: —a brilliant policy, what you are doing, of obfuscation. Make sure you get the whole quote, not just "brilliant policy."

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: OK, and what that means for those who don't know is a clouding it over, making it difficult to understand, because what you are doing is allowing, through this policy, the cities to increase taxes.

I can tell you right now what is going to happen in the city of Toronto or Hamilton or Ottawa or any other place that chooses to increase the taxes. The mayor and the council and those who have recommended the increase of taxes, whether it's for licence plates, cigarettes, alcohol or anything—they are going to blame the municipality for doing that.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, they're not going to thank David?

Mr. Prue: No, they're not going to say, "Thank you and we need the money." They're going to say, "We are taxed enough already." I know that; you know that. But the province is very good when it comes to the download. You have downloaded all these things to the poor municipality, but at the same time you are oh, so cagey. The taxpayers in this province are under the misguided notion, the understanding, that when they pay their property taxes on their homes, condominiums, apartments, businesses, cottages or some farm that they own, they think that that goes to the municipality. They actually think that the city gets it.

The reality is that the province gets most of that money. You get it. We get it. Those people who are pay-

ing the taxes blame poor Mayor Miller or Mayor Di Ianni or whoever. They blame those mayors and those councillors, not understanding even for a second that most of the money ends up at the province.

Mr. Speaker, \$17 billion in this province is collected through property taxes—\$17 billion: \$8 billion goes to the municipalities, but \$9.3 billion comes to the province. Every single time people pay those taxes and wonder, “Why isn’t the fire service getting better? Why is the library not good? Why is the roof leaking? Why is my road not paved?”—all of those questions—it’s because we are taking the money. It’s all for a good purpose, but we take it.

We take it for education: \$6.1 billion. We take it for ODSP and Ontario Works: \$1.3 billion. We take it for social housing: \$880 million. We take it for ambulance services: \$312 million. We take it for public health: \$266 million. And we take it for child care: \$193 million—for a total of \$9.3 billion. But the money comes to us because those are our programs. They are provincially mandated programs. We take the money so that the poor municipalities that go out and say, “I have to increase your property tax by 2% to get half the money,” get blamed. But when they increase the property taxes by 3% or 5.9%, as Mississauga is about to do, the province gets a 5.9% increase. We get it too. We don’t take any flak for it. That’s why I said this is a brilliant policy of obfuscation, because we push the blame down to someone else for what is actually doing this province a lot of financial good.

Interjection: There’s only one taxpayer.

Mr. Prue: There’s only one taxpayer. That’s all this poor lad can say because he hasn’t figured out the rest. I’m really looking forward to when you stand up and talk for an hour on something and make some sense. That would be a good day. “There’s only one taxpayer,” repeated 8,000 times in the hour, would be his speech, I’m sure.

Pat Vanini, who is a wonderful person and works for the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, said it best about what this bill is and what this bill means. AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, says this brilliantly:

“Ontario is the only province in Canada where municipal property taxes are used to subsidize provincial health and social services programs, like welfare and employment services, disability benefits, drug benefits, social housing, child care, homes for the aged, public health and ambulance services.” We’re the only ones; it’s us.

“The federal government noted this situation in the 2004 federal budget: ‘... spending for social services, health and housing represents a very small share of municipal expenditures in most provinces, except in Ontario where it represents almost a third of ... (gross) municipal spending.’”

Is my time up? I’m going to leave it there, and I’m looking forward to the last half.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair thanks the member from Beaches–East York.

It being 6 o’clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m., Monday, December 5.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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